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AUTHOR Batten, Margaret; Girling-Butcher, Sue

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ABSTRACT

In order to test the validity of a measure of Australian students' views on the quality of life within their schools, a small-scale study was conducted in seven secondary schools, including both public and private institutions. The 52-item survey instrument was administered to 651 students in grades 9-12. Followup interviews of students were held in the four schools scoring highest and lowest on the measure. The questionnaire was designed to provide information concerning the students' general satisfaction with their schools, their perceptions of positive and negative qualities of their school environments, and their opinions concerning the schools' effectiveness in encouraging personal and social development, useful learning, and the acquisition of technical competence. Responses were compared by institution, grade level, and sex of respondents. The study results were mixed, failing to provide clear-cut guidelines for designing a school with optimal quality of life. Only the attitude of teachers to students stood out as having a universally critical effect. Measurable but less consistent effects were related to curriculum, peer attitudes, facilities, and school rules. The study indicated the instrument could be useful with minor modification. A copy of the survey instrument is appended. (Author/PGD)

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PERCEPTIONS OF THE QUALITY OF SCHOOL LIFE
A CASE STUDY OF SCHOOLS AND STUDENTS

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Margaret Batten
Sue Girling-Butcher

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INTRODUCTION

In 1978 the Education Research and Development Committee sponsored a three-year research program at the Australian Council for Educational Research (ACER) that centred around the transition from school to the adult world.

A nationally representative sample of students was used for the program, clustered in two age-groups, 13 and 17 years of age in 1978. The same students had participated in the Australian Studies in School Performance conducted by the ACER in 1975. These students were appropriate subjects for the research program because during the three-year span of the project they would be making critical choices about leaving school, further education, and early career, thus enabling us to study the background and achievement factors that affect these dimensions.

The two samples were sent questionnaires at regular intervals to address these areas of concern. Four questionnaires were sent to the younger group, two dealing with vocational decision-making, two with students' perceptions of their school environments. The latter questionnaire evolved from the development of a theoretical model that defined the meaning and structure of the quality of school life. To complement the survey information it was decided to undertake a case study of the quality of school life in a small number of schools, using the theoretical model as a basis for investigation. The case study was to provide information about differences between schools and between year levels, and about the processes at work within a school that influence students' perceptions of the quality of their school lives.

CHAPTER 1

THE QUALITY OF SCHOOL LIFE AND THE CASE STUDY

Studies have been made of student satisfaction with school as this relates to achievement, but little has been done to examine systematically the aspects of school life which contribute to student satisfaction. This chapter describes the development of a model and measure of the dimensions of quality of life for students in schools, and outlines the reasons for the inclusion of the case study.

The Development of the Quality of School Life Measure

A model for the 'structure of well-being' developed by Burt et al. (1978) formed the basis of our study of the quality of school life. Burt's analyses showed the most stable structure of well-being was a four-dimensional one consisting of general satisfaction, positive affect, negative affect and satisfaction with domains.

In the same way that quality of life measures had been developed to monitor the feelings of individuals about their overall environment, it seemed possible to develop quality of school life measures to monitor the feelings of students about their school environment. While a number of studies have been undertaken into the organizational climate of schools (e.g. Halpin, 1966; Finlayson, 1973; Deer, 1980) and students' attitudes to various aspects of schooling (e.g. Jackson, 1968; Connell et al., 1975), few investigations have approached the issue from a quality of life standpoint. An exception is the work of Epstein and McPartland (1976) - these researchers developed a Quality of School Life Scale with three subscales of Satisfaction, Commitment to Classwork, and Reactions to Teachers.

None of the studies reviewed produced a measure that approximated to a translation of the four dimensions of Burt's structure of well-being in an educational context. The task, then, was to develop a quality of school life measure within Burt's framework, operationalizing the four dimensions of general satisfaction, positive affect, negative affect, and satisfaction with domains.

It proved to be relatively easy to translate from a quality of life measure to a quality of school life measure the items that dealt with general satisfaction and with positive and negative affect, but difficulties were experienced with the translation of the domain satisfaction dimension.

General satisfaction. Measures of students' overall level of well-being can be obtained with items such as 'School is a place where I really like to go' (a five-point scale from 'strongly agree' to 'strongly disagree').

Positive affect. Students' perceptions of the specific positive qualities of school

life can be tapped with items like 'School is a place where I get excited and interested in things ... I feel proud of myself ... I feel successful'.

Negative affect. Specific negative qualities of school life can be measured with items such as 'School is a place where I feel very lonely ... I feel depressed and unhappy ... I feel bored'.

Domains. In the quality of life literature, 'education' is only one of the domains of life. As a result, the general quality of life model offers no guidance about the domains of schooling.

Given this, there was little choice but to infer the nature of these domains from whatever theoretical models of schooling exist; and these are few in number. The model chosen as the basis of determining the domains of schooling comes from the work of Spady and Mitchell (1977, 1979) also Mitchell and Spady (1977, 1978). This model sees schools as organizations through which individuals are linked to larger social collectivities; in fact, the school is seen as

> an action system for integrating individual expectations for personal fulfilment with societal expectations for the school to develop the structures necessary to provide for the nurture of personal development, competency, responsibility and integration among students (Mitchell and Spady, 1977:41)

In response to such societal expectations schools have developed organizational structures whose function is to translate these expectations into action within the school; the structures are: supervision, socialization, instruction, and certification.

Societal expectations can be met, and school organizational structures operate successfully, only if students are attracted to these outcomes and respond to the school processes which embody them. There are four major areas of student experience or conditions of motivation corresponding to the four societal expectations and school structures, and these can be diagrammatically represented as follows:

Societal expectations		School structures		Student experiences
Social responsibility	-	Supervision	-	Status
Social integration	-	Socialization	-	Identity
Personal development	-	Instruction	-	Adventure
Technical competency	-	Certification	-	Opportunity

Acquiring a sense of social responsibility, subordinating personal interests to the general welfare, is dependent upon the student achieving status in the group, an acknowledgment of the prerogatives and prestige of the student. The main motivating factor governing the realization of social integration outcomes is identity formation, the development of self-awareness in relation to the larger society. The key to instructional effectiveness in the personal development of the student is the experience of adventure in learning, an experience which is intrinsically rewarding and leads to self-motivation. From the student's perspective, certification processes, which embody performance

standards, are only attractive if they enable the student to qualify for desirable and real future opportunities; the concern here is for the relevance of schooling. It was these four areas of student experience that became the domains of schooling in our Quality of School Life model, and items were written to measure the four domains. No attempt was made to operationalize or examine the four societal expectations or school structures which are linked to the student experiences in the Spady-Mitchell model; these would be appropriate subjects for two further full-scale research studies.

Spady and Mitchell develop the model in some detail beyond this point in the four papers already quoted, where they elaborate the student and teacher behaviours characteristic of the individual and the organizational action systems of the school. A more detailed discussion, both of this model and the subsequent development and application of a Quality of School Life measure can be found in Williams and Batten (1981).

As the literature shows, 'the quality of school life' is a concept that has been given little consideration in educational research; therefore we thought it important that the development and operationalization of our model of school life, which was breaking new ground, should incorporate more than one research approach. The basis of the study's operation was a mail-out questionnaire (covering the four quality of school life dimensions of general satisfaction, positive affect, negative affect, and domains of schooling) to 14-year-old students in a large number of schools. We decided it would be useful to supplement the information derived from this source by making an intensive study of the quality of school life variables in the context of particular schools and with students over a broader age-range.

Contribution of the Case Study to the Quality of School Life Study

The main emphasis in this case study was to be relational, in that it would attempt to investigate and explain the interrelationships among the variables in a case, and perhaps lead to the generation of hypotheses or the support of theories. Specifically, this study seeks to explore the components of the quality of school life model and their interrelationship in a specific school context, and to support, negate, or modify the premises underlying the model.

Case study data have been referred to as 'strong in reality' but difficult to organize, while other research data can be 'weak in reality' but amenable to efficient organization (Adelman et al., 1976). The Quality of School Life survey - a questionnaire administered to a national sample of students in their schools - displayed a tight and fruitful operational structure, but it was difficult to gauge the face validity of the questionnaire items for the students involved who had no contact with the researchers. The direct contact of the case study brings the researcher closer to the 'real world' of

the students in their school context, although the operational structure is looser than the structure of the survey. The differing emphases of the two approaches should serve to balance and strengthen the study as a whole.

The directness of the contact between researchers and subjects in a case study structure can result in positive benefits for the institution or people concerned. It was hoped that the direct and regular contact by the researchers with the principal and some teachers in the case study schools would facilitate feedback of information about the perceptions of each school's own students; in addition, aggregate information about other schools would be provided. Such information could provide a useful contribution to a staff development activity, school evaluation, or the development of school policies.

One of our concerns in the Quality of School Life survey was to make sure that the items in the questionnaire were written in language that was clear and unambiguous to students and that conveyed accurately the meaning of our theoretical constructs. We felt that through interviews and discussions with students from the case study schools we would be able to determine whether or not we had succeeded in this, thus enabling us to further refine the measure. One of the strengths of the case study is its ability to encompass and probe the intricacies and subtleties of social situations. It can gather views on an issue from a variety of sources, and report on discrepancies or conflicts and the possible reasons for them. Our case study discussions would provide us with a diversity of viewpoints on our dimensions of schooling in a particular school context, and the reasons underlying the divergent responses of students to these dimensions.

CHAPTER 2

THE FRAMEWORK OF THE CASE STUDY

Work on the case study could not begin until the Quality of School Life measure had been developed and tested in 1979. In the initial stages of the project, the intention in using the case study was to observe the impact on school decision-making of information fed back to the school from the Quality of School Life study, which would be essentially a study of organizational processes. As the year progressed and the Quality of School Life concept was operationalized, it became apparent that we were developing a valid measure of students' perceptions of their school environment. For this reason the case study changed from being a study of organizational processes that happened to involve the Quality of School Life measure to a more direct and intensive study of the construct itself as it operated for students in a particular school environment. The impact of feedback information became a secondary concern.

The Objectives of the Case Study

The general objective of the case study was to examine, within the context of particular schools, the perceptions of students about the 'quality of school life', and the processes which contribute to the formation of these perceptions. The specific objectives of the case study were:

1 to identify areas of similarity and difference in the quality of school life in the seven case study schools;

2 to determine whether any changes occur in the quality of school life as perceived by students at various stages in their school careers, and in retrospect after they have left school;

3 to identify the schools in which students record the highest and lowest degree of satisfaction within the four domains of schooling, and to obtain further and more detailed information from students in these schools about the nature of their experiences in the domains;

4 to establish whether there are any additional factors, not included in the domains of the model, which may affect students' experiences and hence have an impact on their estimation of the quality of school life;

5 to obtain feedback on the questionnaire in order to: (i) identify those items which students find difficult, irrelevant or ambiguous; (ii) determine whether student's interpretations of key construct items are in accord with the underlying theory we had developed;

6 to feed back information to the schools about students' perceptions of the quality of their school lives, and to note outcomes of this feedback.

Studies on school effects have tended to focus on student outcomes (in the form of achievement) and to look for school differences in these terms. McPartland (1976) felt that researchers failed to find differences in school effects because superficial measures of school environment had been used, and he suggested that future studies should emphasize student outcomes that went beyond strictly academic talents. He worked in conjunction with Epstein to develop and validate an instrument that would measure the quality of school life (Epstein and McPartland, 1976). The research of Jencks et al. (1972) indicated that the school's output depended largely on a single input, the characteristics of the entering children, and they concluded that cognitive inequalities (and ultimately adult achievement) were not altered by the school. They suggested that researchers should look at school effects in a different way, to evaluate schools in terms of their immediate effects on teachers and students, which appear to be much more variable than their long term effects.

> Instead of evaluating schools in terms of long-term effects on their alumni, which appears to be relatively uniform, we think it wiser to evaluate schools in terms of their immediate effects on teachers and students, which appear much more variable. Some schools are dull, depressing, even terrifying places, while others are lively, comfortable, and reassuring. If we think of school life as an end in itself rather than a means to some other end, such differences are enormously important. Eliminating these differences would not do much to make adults more equal, but it would do a great deal to make the quality of children's (and teachers') lives more equal. Since children are in school for a fifth of their lives, this would be a significant accomplishment. (Jencks et al., 1972:256)

Longitudinal research conducted by Epstein and McPartland (1975) showed that students may increase their Quality of School Life score over time in innovative settings which have been designed to upgrade the quality of school life.

Recommendations and findings such as those outlined above provide a justification for the general objective of the case study, to explore further the concept of the quality of school life for students.

In relation to Objective 1, the literature shows that there are certain variables that can affect the level of student satisfaction with the school environment. Girls appear to react more positively to school than boys (Jackson, 1968; Connell et al., 1975); the type of school attended (Government, Independent or Catholic) has been found to affect students' general attitude to school (Connell et al., 1975; Poole, 1978). A critical influence on school climate and students' attitudes to school is, as one might expect, the teachers. Silberman, commenting on a study of high school students, said that a factor of importance to many students was student-teacher rapport outside the classroom, whether achieved through activities, guidance, clubs or individual conferences, and that such contact 'had a great deal to do with classroom morale and with the potential

influence of teachers on the school climate' (Silberman, 1971:332). Wright and Headlam (1976) interviewed 150 18-year-olds and found that the question which triggered the strongest emotional reaction was one concerning the extent of respect accorded to students by teachers at school. The respondents were almost unanimous in their identification of the most important attributes of a good teacher - respect for students, involvement, and willingness to help. A study of classroom social climates in 20 secondary schools (Fry and Coe, 1980) found that classrooms perceived to be high in teacher support and involvement were associated with student motivations of self-improvement, academic success and enjoyment of learning, while classrooms perceived to be teacher-controlled or competition-oriented were related with anti-school feelings and a relative absence of self-improvement desires and enjoyment of learning.

Hence with Objective 1, we hypothesized that there would be differences between schools in the perceived quality of school life and that some of these differences could be attributed to the sex of the students, the type of school, and the nature of the teacher-student relationship. In the context of the four domains in the Quality of School Life model, we thought that differences between schools, according to student perceptions, might reflect certain differences in educational emphasis in the schools, so that one school might record the highest degree of approbation from students in the Status domain, while another might score highly in the Adventure domain.

Objective 2 refers to the perceived quality of school life at different age levels. It was expected that there would be differences in the responses of the younger and older students and the school leavers. Connell et al. (1975) found that while most teenagers seemed to 'tolerate' school, rather than loving or hating it, there was a slightly stronger dislike of school expressed in the middle years of secondary schooling compared to the early and later years. This finding was confirmed by Wright and Headlam (1976) whose respondents reported that enthusiasm for school work was most marked in Forms I and VI, and that senior students felt they were 'treated as individuals' far more than students in the middle school. An increased sense of responsibility was acquired over a three-year period by senior students in the study recorded by Silberman (1971), although schools varied in their encouragement of these traits in their senior students. There is also some evidence in the literature that attitudes to school can change after the student has left (Wright and Headlam, 1976; Tinney et al., 1974).

Objectives 3 and 4 are extensions of Objectives 1 and 2; they call for a more detailed examination of students' perceptions of the quality of their school lives and the factors in the school environment that influence these perceptions. Because of the multiplicity of variables that may contribute to the formation of student attitudes, coming from within and without the school, we would expect considerable variation within a classroom as well as between year levels and between schools. Again we would expect that teachers would be a crucial contributing factor to this variation. Research

has shown that teaching style can affect the attitude towards learning at the class level and at the individual level (see Fry and Coe's (1980) study of teaching styles that are supportive and involved as opposed to competition-oriented, and Silberman's (1971) summaries of studies on the different treatment of students by teachers and the consequent effect on the psychological well-being of the individual student). Another factor that could have a marked effect on student responses is the peer group. A number of researchers (for example, Coleman et al., 1966, and Connell et al., 1975) refer to the strength and power of the adolescent sub-culture and its ascendancy over teacher influence. Hargreaves (1967) suggests that pressures towards conformity to the peer group will be especially powerful after the third year of secondary school, a time when many teenagers begin to reject the authority of parents and teachers. Larson (1972) distinguishes between the importance to adolescents of the views and values of peers and those of parents; he found that peers were important in contexts with immediate implications and parents in those with long-term implications. We might expect therefore, that our investigation of the factors that govern student response might uncover the importance of peer influence, particularly in the domains of Identity and Status which are concerned with social development.

Other factors that could influence student responses are subject choice and content, systems of reward and punishment, non-academic and extra-curricular activities (considered by Coleman et al. (1966) to be a potent influence on adolescent students), and the nature of the intellectual demands made upon the student. With regard to the latter aspect, Connell et al. argue that

> The school has an intellectual culture which the teachers wish to convey to the pupils; and its system of competitive assessment is the main sanction by which it controls the students' learning. (Connell et al., 1975:222)

In our examination of the factors that influence students' perceptions of their school environment, we are interested both in those factors that fall within the four domains of our model (Objective 3) and in any factors that may not have been included in the model (Objective 4).

The case study situation provides an excellent opportunity to obtain direct feedback from the subjects of a research study; in this case, feedback on possible misinterpretations or ambiguities in the questionnaire items (Objective 5). The importance of such feedback is stressed by Oppenheim (1966:26) who says that 'pilot work can be of the greatest help in devising the actual wording of questions, and it operates as a healthy check, since fatal ambiguities may lurk in the most unexpected quarters'. An investigation into respondent understanding of survey questions (Belson, 1968) found both the frequency and range of misinterpretations of survey questions to be very high. Oppenheim also points out that pilot work should be carried out with respondents as similar as possible to those in the main inquiry, which in our case was the 15-year-old student sample in the national survey.

In relation to Objective 6, we may find that information fed back to the case study schools about student perceptions does not coincide with the school's aims or expectations. The research literature shows that student values and school values do not always coincide. Silberman (1971:362) found that 'student's perceptions of what is important in schools are especially uncomplimentary to schools' official intentions'; Wright and Headlam (1976) found that students see school and student values to be in conflict - the school placed the highest value on academic qualifications and the lowest value on personal development, while the student value structure showed a reverse placement. Greenberger and Sorensen (1974:355) found that 'the socializing influences in (the school) are largely unrecognized and unmeasured, because of a pre-occupation with academic outcomes of the school experience and measurement of those outcomes'. Jackson (1968) reported a study in which teachers' predictions of student attitudes towards school and the student attitudes themselves were compared and yielded a correlation coefficient of 0.35, which indicated that while the accuracy of the predictions was decidedly better than chance, the teachers were far from perfect in their estimates; the same study showed that teachers could identify satisfied students more easily than dissatisfied ones, and in these two groups they could identify satisfied girls and dissatisfied boys more easily than the other two sub-groups. Teachers could also identify more readily the attitudes of students in a high ability group than those in the low ability group.

Research Design

The following pages describe how and why the case study schools and the student sample were selected, and give a brief outline of the methods of data collection and analysis.

Selection of Schools

Initially it was planned to administer the Quality of School Life questionnaire to the older group in the main study (in which each school was represented by 25 students), and the case study schools were to be selected on the basis of the survey outcomes. Later alterations in the research program led to the deletion of this particular component of the study, and the Quality of School Life questionnaire was administered instead to the younger group of students who were scattered in small groups over a large number of schools; therefore no simple basis could be established for the selection of case study schools.

Rather than rely on a random selection or the subjective judgement of the researchers, it was decided to hold discussions with experienced inservice education officers who were in direct contact with Government, Independent and Catholic schools. On the basis of impressions gained as they travelled around the schools, the officers were

asked to nominate schools which they felt gave either particular emphasis to one of the four domains in the Quality of School Life model or equal emphasis to all four domains.

It should be noted that the case study was not intended to be a test of the inservice education officers' nominations; the nominations were merely a guide for the researchers, a starting point for the study.

Seven schools were selected from the list of nominations. One of the criteria for selection was that the schools should be located within a 30 kilometre radius of Melbourne, to enable easy regular access by the researchers. Another criterion was that each of the following school-type pairs should be represented in the sample - single sex and co-educational, government and non-government, inner-surburban and outer-surburban. This would enable an exploration of the factors which contribute to the quality of school life for students in a variety of school settings.

The sample comprised three Government high schools (two co-educational, one girls' school), one Government technical boys' school, one Catholic girls' school, and two Independent schools (one boys' and one girls' school).

Student Sample

For each school the case study was carried out with 20-30 students drawn from year levels 9, 10, 11, 12, and a similar-sized group of 18-year-old ex-students. Each group was to include a broad range of abilities rather than a narrow specialist stream so that it would be generally representative of the school population.

Two main reasons governed the choice of this particular age range for special study:

1 There was a clear tie-in to the major study, in that the age-range included 14-year-olds and 18-year-olds (the two age levels of the national survey sample), and the five groups span the school-leaving years or points of transition (the focus of the main study).

2 As previously discussed, the research literature suggested that students' perceptions of their school experience in the middle years of secondary schooling differ from perceptions in senior years and after leaving school.

Data Collection and Analysis

Data collection was spread over three school terms in 1980. The three principal methods of data collection used were questionnaires, discussion groups and individual interviews.

The 52 item Quality of School Life questionnaire was to be administered to the selected students in a class period. A frequency count would be taken of the questionnaire responses in order to produce a quality of school life pattern for each school, and to identify the particular dimensions of each school environment (and the key items within those dimensions) that provided students with the greatest degree of

satisfaction. A Multiple Classification Analysis (Andrews et al., 1973) would be used to examine the influence of school, sex, and year level on student responses. The questionnaire (with statements rephrased in the past tense) was to be sent to the group of ex-students from each school, and their results compared with those of students still at school. These data and analyses are intended to meet Objectives 1 and 2 of the case study (see p.15).

The data analyses would also be used to select high and low scoring students for individual interviews to explore in greater depth the factors which generated positive and negative student experiences of school life (Objectives 3 and 4).

It was planned to hold small discussion groups of five and six students at different year levels soon after the administration of the questionnaire to gauge their initial reactions to the questionnaire and to record any difficulties they encountered with particular items (Objective 5).

At various stages during the year information derived from the analyses would be passed on to school personnel and discussed with them (Objective 6). Documentation would also be collected on school aims.

Diary of Events

This section maps the progress of the case study by means of brief monthly accounts which detail the sequence of data collection and feedback to schools.

November (1979): School principals were contacted by telephone and invited to participate in the study. All accepted. An eleven-page document was sent to the principals explaining the Quality of School Life model, the development of the measure, and the purpose of the case study.

February (1980): Arrangements were made for school visits to discuss the project, answer questions, and organize questionnaire administration. Discussions were held with principal, vice-principal and some members of staff.

March: Questionnaires were administered in the schools by the researchers. Half-hour discussion groups were held with students at each of the four year levels in two schools one week after the testing session.

April: The contact person in each school (principal or vice-principal) was sent item response frequencies for each year level in own school with corresponding average frequencies for all schools, accompanied by an explanatory letter.

May-June:	The data were analysed to examine the influence of school, sex, and year level on student responses, and high and low scoring students were selected for interviews. (Over the next few months, as lists were made available by the schools, questionnaires were sent to ex-students of the schools).
July:	Schools were sent bar graphs showing sex, year level and school differences for the seven dimensions, plus mean scores for dimensions of students at each year level in own school. Researchers visited the schools to explain the results.
August:	As a result of interest expressed by the schools, more detailed information about individual school performance was extracted and sent to schools - this showed, for each year level in the school, those items for which percentage agreement was more than 10 per cent above or below average for all schools.
September:	10-minute individual interviews were held with students at four schools.
October-December:	The information obtained from the interviews and discussion groups was classified according to the domains of schooling and compared with the questionnaire data.

CHAPTER 3

THE QUESTIONNAIRE TO STUDENTS

This chapter covers the administration of the Quality of School Life questionnaire to students and ex-students of the seven schools involved in the case study, the analysis of the data, and an explanation of the next stage in the study - a more intensive investigation of the quality of school life in four of the schools.

The first Quality of School Life questionnaire, containing 81 items, was sent to the 250 participating schools in the national survey in July 1979. Item analyses were carried out and those items with low correlation coefficients within the four domain scales were eliminated. The refined version of the questionnaire contained 52 items covering the four Quality of School Life dimensions: two General Satisfaction items, five Positive Affect items, five Negative Affect items, and ten items for each of the four domains of Status, Identity, Adventure and Opportunity. The questionnaire was comprised of statements about school to which students were asked to respond on a five-point scale of agreement, from 'strongly agree' to 'strongly disagree'. This was the questionnaire that was administered to the students in the case study schools in March 1980 (See Appendix I).

The following list gives examples of items in the seven scales contained in the Quality of School Life questionnaire.

SCHOOL IS A PLACE WHERE...

I really like to go	(General Satisfaction)
I feel successful	(Positive Affect)
I feel proud of myself	(Positive Affect)
I get upset	(Negative Affect)
I feel restless	(Negative Affect)
I feel I am a responsible person	(Status)
I feel important	(Status)
I learn a lot about myself	(Identity)
other students are very friendly	(Identity)
schoolwork is always interesting	(Adventure)
teachers take a personal interest in helping me with my schoolwork	(Adventure)
I can see that what I learn will be useful to me later on	(Opportunity)
teachers are fair and just	(Opportunity)

Administration

The questionnaire was administered by the two researchers within a class period, usually English lessons because these tended to be mixed ability classes and one of our criteria had been that the groups selected should be representative of the total year level

cohort. Each session was prefaced by an explanation of the nature and purpose of the study and students were encouraged to ask questions. In one school (a late selection) the staff offered to administer the questionnaire themselves; this proved to be a mistake for, although a clear explanation of the study was given to the teachers, it later emerged that some of the senior students did not take the questionnaire seriously because they did not really understand why they were doing it. In another school, administration was made difficult because of organizational problems, necessitating mass administration of the questionnaire in the school hall, which led to problems of control and supervision.

The class teachers were usually in attendance during questionnaire administration, and most expressed an interest in the study; several teachers used either the questionnaire items or the quality of school life concept itself as a starting point for discussion in a subsequent lesson.

Data Analysis

A total of 651 students in the seven schools completed the Quality of School Life questionnaire, an average of 23 students at each year level.

The purpose of data analysis in the case study was to provide some illuminative descriptive information about similarities and differences in the quality of school life between schools and between year levels within schools; the main Quality of School Life study produced the hard statistical evidence about the model and measure.

Two modes of analysis were used with the questionnaire responses. Simple frequency counts were taken of responses to each item, presented as percentages in three categories, Agree (combining the Strongly Agree and Agree responses), Half Agree, and Disagree (combining the Strongly Disagree and Disagree responses). These frequencies were extracted for the four year levels across all schools and within each school. This presentation enabled the researchers, and school personnel, to compare the performance of an individual school group with the performance of a general year level cohort.

The body of data available on the 40 items associated with the domains of schooling obtained at the four year levels and from ex-students provided more information than could be readily scanned for relationships of consequence unless some simple sifting technique could be employed. Unfortunately the sample of 651 students drawn from seven schools was not a random sample, although the students selected within schools might be considered to have been chosen by generally random procedures. In order to develop a crude screening test it was decided to employ Oppenheim's (1966:287-292) nomographs that are commonly used for testing statistical significance between percentages. However, it is important to note that the students are clustered together in schools and a design effect of 3 might be expected at these year levels of

schooling which would serve to reduce the effective size of the samples being examined. With groups of these sizes and composition, a difference in percentage of 15 per cent was significant at the 10 per cent level, and only differences in excess of this value are considered in this report as being worthy of discussion. Although somewhat lacking in precision, this approach and the use of the nomograph in this way is helpful 'as an aid to inspection, a simple device that will enable us to focus attention on the more important differences and sort the grain from the chaff' (Oppenheim, 1966:289).

The Multiple Classification Analysis (Andrews et al., 1973) was applied to the data to enable us to examine the inter-relationships between three predictor variables (school, sex, and year level) and the dependent variables (each of the seven scales). As discussed in Chapter 2, the research literature suggests that school type, sex of student, and year level may all play some part in determining the differences in students' perceptions of the quality of their school lives. The Multiple Classification Analysis adjusts the mean scores in order to enable us to look at the effect of one of these factors on student perception without confounding the effect with the influence of the other two factors. Although the degree of variation accounted for in each case was relatively small, it was useful to be able to look at the adjusted mean scores for the seven scales to observe the different patterns that emerged - for instance, we could look at the differences between schools in their responses to the General Satisfaction items, holding constant to the effects of the two other independent variables, sex and year level. Figures 3.1 and 3.2 show the adjusted mean scores for the seven scales as bar graphs, the form in which they were presented to the schools.

Results

The outcomes of the different modes of analysis are discussed below: first, the bar graphs which represent the adjusted mean scores for the three predictor variables of school, sex, and year level; then the differences in percentage agreement of year levels for items within the four domain scales; and finally the variation in responses to domain scales and items at four schools selected for further investigation.

Adjusted Mean Scores for School, Sex, and Year Level

Responses to the questionnaire were scored in the following way: Strongly Agree (5), Agree (4), Half Agree (3), Disagree (2), Strongly Disagree (1). The maximum possible score, indicating full agreement, was thus 10 (from two items) for the General Satisfaction scale, 25 each (from five items) for Positive Affect and Negative Affect, and 50 each (from ten items) for the Status, Identity, Adventure, and Opportunity scales.

Figure 3.1 is a graphic representation of the adjusted mean scores for the General Satisfaction, Positive and Negative Affect scales. The effect of 'school' on the scores,

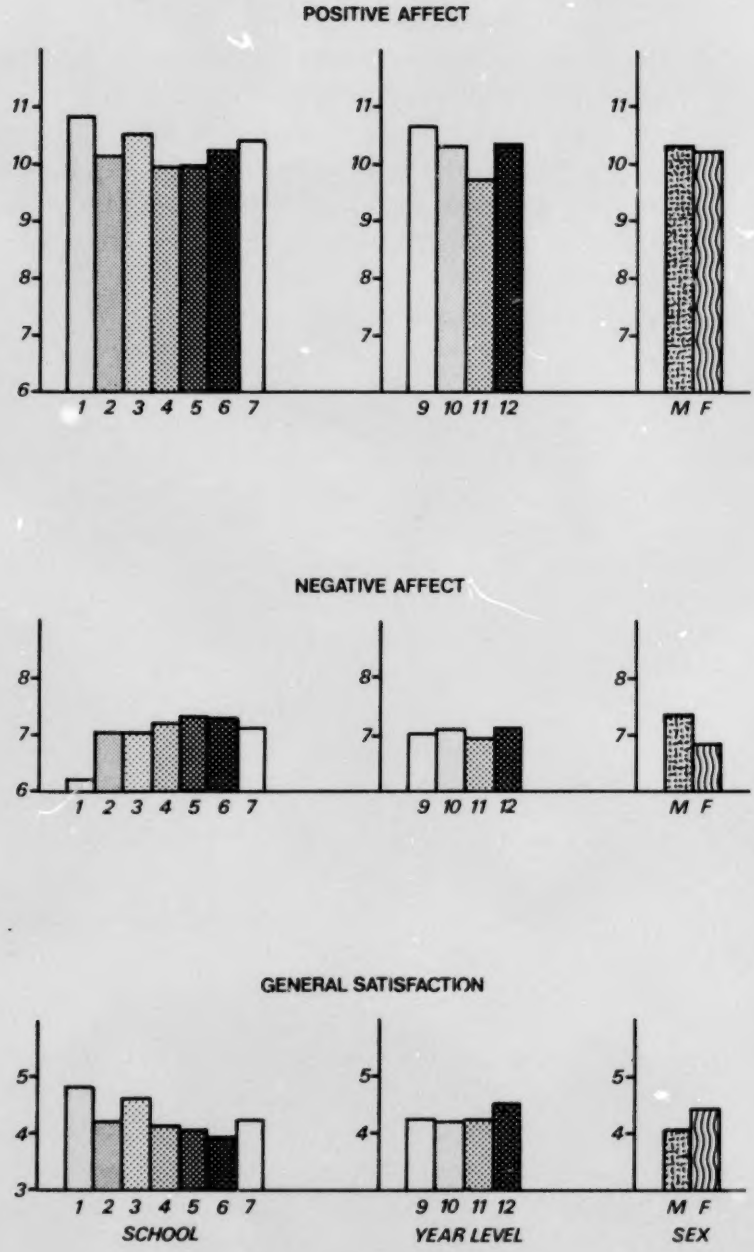


Figure 3.1 Adjusted Mean Scores for General Satisfaction, Positive Affect and Negative Affect

holding constant year level and sex influences, is more varied in responses to the General Satisfaction and Positive Affect items than to the Negative Affect items (with the exception of one school). The patterns of response do not vary a great deal across the scales - Schools 1 and 3 score consistently higher than the others (or lower in the case of Negative Affect, where a low level of agreement with items indicates a high quality of school life), and Schools 4, 5 and 6 consistently lower.

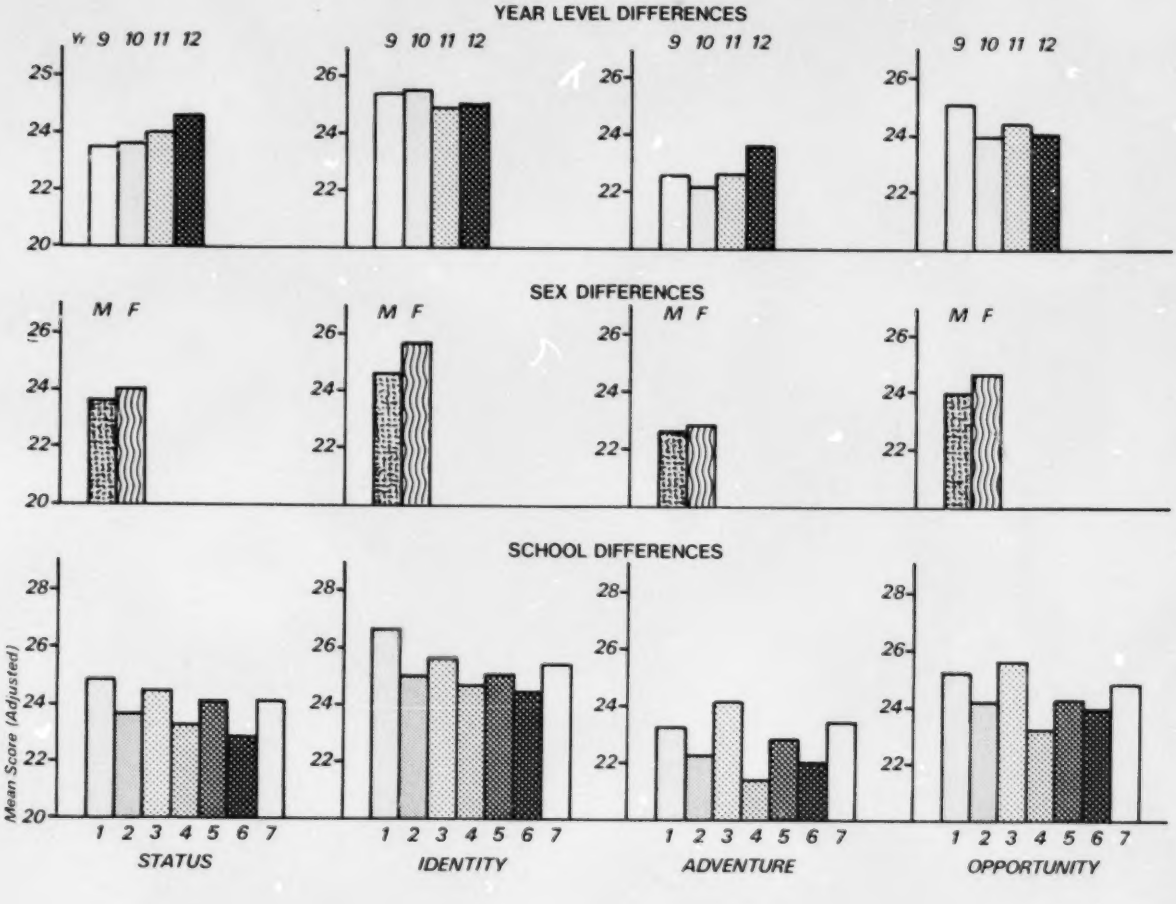
No clear pattern emerges in the consideration of year level responses on the Satisfaction or Affect scales: Negative Affect scores were influenced very little by year level, and the same applied to General Satisfaction items, although Year 12 students responded a little more positively than the others; Year 9 and Year 12 students produced the highest scores on Positive Affect items.

Boys and girls responded in much the same way to Positive Affect items, but on the other two scales the quality of school life appeared to be better for females, who produced higher General Satisfaction and lower Negative Affect scores.

Figure 3.2 depicts the adjusted mean scores for Status, Identity, Adventure, and Opportunity according to year level, sex and school, in each case holding constant the effects of the other two variables.

With regard to sex differences, it would seem that the girls in the sample had more positive perceptions of the quality of their school lives in the four domains than the boys, particularly in the Identity domain. This finding confirms the hypothesis, derived from the research literature, that some of the differences between schools in the perceived quality of school life could be attributed to the sex of students.

Year level differences in responses to the domains were not consistent, although overall the responses of Year 12 students were the most positive and those of Year 10 the least positive. Few differences could be observed in the Identity domain or in Adventure (with the exception of a higher score from Year 12 students) and Opportunity (excluding a higher score from Year 9); Status responses showed an upward trend from Year 9 to Year 12. Two of these outcomes would have been anticipated by the schools and supported by the literature: one, that Year 12 students show a greater degree of interest in learning, and have a more strongly developed capacity for self-motivation than younger students (although whether this is from intrinsic desires or extrinsic pressures from the current Higher School Certificate system is difficult to determine); and two, that students acquire more prestige and status as they progress through the middle to the upper levels of secondary schooling. It may be surprising to schools that Year 9 students see their learning as more relevant and valuable and the organizational structure as more equitable than do students at higher levels, although this could be because the younger students are less clear about their future directions, and do not feel the immediacy of the decisions to be made about education and career that face the older students.


YEAR LEVEL DIFFERENCES
Yr 9 10 11 12
9 10 11 12
9 10 11 12
9 10 11 12
SEX DIFFERENCES
M F
M F
M F
M F
SCHOOL DIFFERENCES
Mean Score (Adjusted)
20
22
24
26
28
1 2 3 4 5 6 7
STATUS
IDENTITY
ADVENTURE
OPPORTUNITY

There were quite marked differences between the seven schools within each of the four domains of schooling, but there was a consistency in the pattern of response across the domains. In each school the Identity items elicited the most positive responses and the Adventure items the least positive; two possible explanations for this are that schools are more successful at developing students' self-awareness than they are at inculcating a love of learning, or that the Identity items were phrased in a way that made them more attractive to students than the Adventure items. This outcome seems to discount the possibility that a particular school might give special emphasis to one domain and that this would be reflected in different orders of response to the domains in some schools.

A second point of consistency noted across the domains (see Figure 3.2) was that Schools 1 and 3 tended to score higher than the other schools in all four scales, and Schools 4 and 6 scored lower on all scales. This reinforces the finding reported in the previous paragraph that schools, at least the schools in our sample, do not concentrate attention on one particular aspect of school life to the extent that students perceive more benefits accruing to them from this aspect than from any of the other aspects; instead, student satisfaction with the quality of school life seems to be spread across the whole range of school experience. Therefore if the degree of student satisfaction in a school is high in one domain it tends to be high in all domains, and if it is moderate or low in one domain, then it is moderate or low in all domains.

Looking at the four high and low scoring schools, a secondary response pattern can be observed: School 1 showed the highest response rate and School 6 the lowest on the Status and Identity scales, while School 3 showed the highest and School 4 the lowest response rate on the Adventure and Opportunity scales. This outcome supports the rationale of the Quality of School Life model in which Status and Identity (leading to social responsibility and social integration through the school structures of supervision and socialization) may be termed social development experiences, while Adventure and Opportunity (leading to personal development and technical competence through the school structures of instruction and certification) may be termed learning acquisition experiences. Thus one might expect that a school which performs well in one of the learning acquisition domains, for example, might also perform well in the other learning acquisition domain, and this did indeed happen consistently with the two highest and lowest scoring schools.

Year Level Responses to Items

Some indication of differences in the attitude to school of students at the four year levels was given in the bar graphs drawn up for the seven scales and discussed in the previous section. To get a more explicit picture of year level differences we looked at the pattern of student agreement with individual items within the scales.

Table 3.1 Agreement Percentages in Domain Scales According to Year Level

Item No.		Scale	YEAR LEVEL 9 (N=190)	10 (N=176)	11 (N=141)	12 (N=161)	Ex (N=102)
		OPPORTUNITY					
11	*	I can see that what I learn will be useful to me later on	77.9	67.1	57.5	53.5	34.3
15		I don't see the value of what we learn	76.8	64.2	69.5	72.2	52.0
46	*	teachers are fair and just	27.4	28.4	34.0	40.3	42.2
12	*	teachers give me the marks I deserve	60.0	57.4	56.7	63.9	64.7
50		I am unable to question the marks I am given by the teachers	48.4	50.6	52.5	64.6	65.7
41	*	teachers will not discuss the marks they give me	46.3	47.7	59.6	73.6	69.6
35		I don't do well in tests	50.0	42.6	50.4	47.9	45.1
13	*	I can learn whatever I need to know	50.5	47.2	30.5	25.7	31.4
21		I can't get things to work my way	42.6	44.3	53.9	43.8	57.8
47	*	I can learn what I need to get by in life	60.0	53.4	42.6	26.4	30.4
		ADVENTURE					
33	*	schoolwork is always interesting	11.6	10.8	11.4	11.8	16.7
45	*	learning is a lot of fun	26.3	24.4	24.1	22.9	28.4
9	*	I get satisfaction from my ability to cope with my work	67.4	66.5	73.8	70.8	64.7
25		I like to find out more about the things we do in class	52.6	47.2	44.7	42.4	28.4
32	*	I have learnt how to find whatever information I need	64.2	54.6	55.3	57.6	60.8
18	*	I know how to cope with the work	64.2	63.1	48.2	54.2	56.9
34	*	teachers take a personal interest in helping me with my schoolwork	21.6	31.8	34.0	52.1	50.0
27	*	teachers are friendly to me in class	41.6	44.3	54.6	65.3	65.7
16	*	teachers listen to what I say	41.1	43.2	36.9	53.5	62.8
40	*	teachers take notice of me in class	33.7	37.5	30.5	47.9	54.9

Item No.		Scale	YEAR LEVEL 9 (N=190)	10 (N=176)	11 (N=141)	12 (N=161)	Ex (N=102)
		IDENTITY					
24	*	I get to know myself better	45.3	43.8	44.0	38.2	48.0
37	*	I learn a lot about myself	39.5	37.5	39.7	38.2	37.3
7	*	I have good friends	90.0	90.9	87.2	82.6	83.3
49	*	other students are very friendly	52.6	59.7	53.2	62.5	59.8
30	*	other students listen to what I say	53.2	48.9	47.5	50.7	52.9
44		nobody takes any notice of me	72.6	73.3	74.5	76.4	75.5
52	*	I feel I am a worthwhile person	51.1	51.7	51.8	54.9	53.9
3		I am popular with other students	54.2	52.3	48.9	43.8	63.7
20	*	I feel proud to be a student	37.9	35.2	25.5	38.2	28.4
39		I can mix with the people I admire	54.7	52.8	42.6	43.1	44.1
		STATUS					
6	*	people think a lot of me	24.7	25.0	17.7	19.4	38.2
4	*	people think I'm not very important	49.0	45.5	52.5	64.6	52.0
1	*	I feel I am a responsible person	63.7	69.9	62.4	72.9	58.8
14	*	I feel important	24.7	28.4	17.7	27.8	26.5
29		I never win anything	53.2	51.7	59.6	60.4	46.1
43		I often win competitions in class or in sport	23.2	22.2	21.3	10.4	20.6
22	*	I am not treated with respect	47.9	53.4	66.7	67.4	62.8
2		I know how I am supposed to behave	91.6	88.1	87.9	84.7	87.3
5	*	I am not trusted to work on my own	72.6	77.8	83.7	81.3	73.5
42		students have very few rights	33.2	32.4	38.3	51.4	49.0

No great differences or clear trends were observable in the General Satisfaction or Affect items, so again attention was focused on the domains of schooling, which produced some interesting response patterns (see the first four year level columns of Table 3.1).

In the Status domain, the three items that seemed to govern the upward trend from Year 9 to Year 12 seen in the bar graph (Figure 3.2) were those that concerned respect, the acknowledgment of one's importance, and the rights of students (items 4, 22, 42). The difference in percentage agreement between Year 9 and Year 12 for these items (see Table 3.1) was considered to be of consequence using the approach outlined above.

In the Adventure domain, responses to the items about teacher-student relationships all showed an upward trend from Year 9 to Year 12; this trend was particularly evident in items 27 and 34 (teachers being friendly in class and taking a personal interest in students) where increases in agreement of 20-30 per cent from Year 9 to Year 12 were recorded. The one item which showed the reverse trend (agreement diminishing from Year 12 to Year 9) was 'I like to find out more about the things we do in class' (item 25).

Again in the Opportunity domain it was those items dealing with teacher-student relationships (concerning teacher fairness and discussion of marks) that revealed the development of a more positive attitude as students progressed up the school; the differences in response to items 41 and 50 were considered to be of consequence. There was also a strong reverse trend, showing diminishing agreement from Year 9 to Year 12, for items 11, 13, and 47, which dealt with the opportunity to learn things that were relevant to one's future life.

To summarize the year level differences in the quality of students' lives at these seven schools, it seems that as students get older they feel they are accorded more respect and independence, and develop a closer and more fruitful relationship with teachers, but the passage of time also seems to lead students to become disillusioned about school work and its relevance to their future lives.

Questionnaire to Ex-Students

We conjectured that young people's attitudes towards their school experience might change once they had left school. To test this hypothesis we sent copies of the Quality of School Life questionnaire (rewritten in the past tense) to about 28 ex-students from each of the seven schools. We asked the schools for a group of ex-students of mixed ability, aged 18-19 years in 1980, having left school between 1977 and 1979 (so that some early school leavers as well as exit Higher School Certificate students would be included); in this way the groups might in some respects be comparable to the classes of mixed ability tested within the schools. There was a response rate to the ex-students'

questionnaire of 55 per cent, so the results must be treated with some caution; no attempt was made to follow up non-respondents or to replace the ex-students whose questionnaires were returned 'Address Unknown'.

As we have seen, responses of students still in school to the questionnaire showed the highest level of agreement with items in the Identity domain, followed by Opportunity, Status and Adventure. Ex-students also rated Identity items highest of all and Status remained third in line, but Adventure rose to second place and Opportunity fell to fourth. The item statistics which govern these changes are discussed later in an examination of individual items.

Evidence presented in an earlier part of this chapter showed that current students in Schools 1 and 3 scored consistently higher and students in Schools 4 and 6 consistently lower in the four domains than students in the other schools. Ex-students' responses showed a slightly varied pattern, with Schools 1 and 3 still maintaining high scores and School 4 low scores, but School 5 joined the top rankers while School 6 rose to the middle of the ranks, and School 2 produced the lowest scores of all. As might be expected from the comparisons just described, ex-students from School 5 scored markedly and consistently higher than students at any of the year levels within that school (in five of the seven scales), and School 2's ex-students scored consistently lower than the students within that school (in six of the seven scales). Thus five of the seven schools were viewed in much the same way by present and past students, while in the remaining two schools the perceptions of ex-students varied markedly from those of current students, one in a positive and the other in a negative direction.

A comparison of students' and ex-students' responses to items within each of the four domain scales (Table 3.1) revealed little of interest in the Status or Identity scales, but some clear patterns emerged in the Adventure and Opportunity domains.

There was a similar pattern to all responses concerning teacher-student relationships in the two domains (items 41, 46 and 50 in Opportunity, and items 27 and 34 in Adventure): a general trend towards a strengthening agreement with these items can be observed progressing from Year 9 to Year 12; this was maintained in the responses of ex-students, which showed a level of agreement slightly above or below the Year 12 level but well above the other years. It is apparent that the feelings of closeness and mutual respect developed in the last years of secondary school between teacher and student were still remembered in the same way by school leavers after a lapse of a year or two. Two other items in the Adventure domain ('teachers listen to what I say', item 16, and 'teachers take notice of me in class', item 40) showed a stronger response from ex-students than from students in Years 11 and 12 - perhaps the strictures that are innate in the group situation of the classroom fade from the memory once school is finished while the strength of the relationships with teachers remains vivid. On the other hand, item 25 'I like to find out more about the things we do in class' showed a

slight downward trend in agreement from Year 9 to Year 12, with ex-students falling a further 14 per cent below the Year 12 level. Again, perhaps ex-students tend to forget the specific details, positive this time, of the classroom situation - certain topics may create an immediate though not sustained interest.

Ex-students' responses to the two Opportunity items concerned with the relevance of school learning to later life confirmed a suggestion made earlier that as young people grow older they become increasingly disillusioned with this aspect of schooling. This disillusionment is obviously maintained when they leave the shelter of the classroom and begin their careers; it was particularly apparent in the response to item 11, 'I can see that what I learn will be useful to me later on', where there was a considerable drop in agreement from Year 9 to Year 12, with a further reduction in agreement from ex-students. The differences between Year 9 and Year 12 and between Year 12 and ex-students were great enough to be considered of consequence according to the procedures we have used. The difference between responses of Year 12 and ex-students to item 15, concerning the value of school learning, was considered to be of consequence also; ex-students were far less confident than students still in school that such value existed.

About a dozen ex-students who returned the questionnaire added comments of their own. Some of the comments referred to particular items, others were about school in general. Past students from School 3 pointed out the inapplicability of items concerning competition and marks, and a number of respondents said that the most crucial factor in their school lives was the attitude and behaviour of their teachers. Two respondents picked up an ambiguity in item 13 '(School was a place where...) I could learn whatever I needed to know' - does this mean that students were capable of learning what was required, or that the school provided the opportunity for such learning to take place? This ambiguity possibly provides an explanation of the anomaly of the within-school variation in responses to this item and the supposedly similar item 21.

Focus on Four Schools

At this stage we began to look more closely at the most important function of the case-study, the investigation of a process in order to help explain an outcome, which in this case was an investigation of the factors in the school environment of students at different year levels which directed the development of their perceptions of the quality of their school lives. This was to be achieved through group discussions and individual interviews with students. Although the detailed discussion of the interviews is contained in Chapter 5, it seems appropriate to describe in this section the basis for the selection of four of the seven schools for further investigation, centred around student interviews.

Areas for Further Investigation

Because it was impossible, given the constraints of the study schedule, to interview samples of students from each of the four year levels in all schools about all seven scales, a process of elimination was instigated. We decided to concentrate our follow-up on the four schools which had produced consistently high or low performances on the questionnaire, Schools 1, 3, 4 and 6. Rather than attempt a detailed examination of all seven scales, we focused on the four domains of schooling. The General Satisfaction, Positive and Negative Affect scales contained fewer items and were adaptations of an already established and relatively straightforward research framework (the quality of life research), whereas the domains brought us into contact with an untested and complex model of schooling.

We decided to follow up two lines of enquiry in the four schools: to identify the year levels at which there was the greatest difference in responses between schools for the four domains, and within each school to identify the domain in which there was the greatest difference in responses from year levels. Students would be selected for individual interview in accordance with the areas identified. In this way we felt we would be fufilling Objectives 3 and 4 of the study, obtaining more detailed information from students about the nature of their experiences in the domains, and establishing whether there were any additional factors that may have contributed to the quality of their school lives.

In the interval between the administration of the questionnaire in March and the conducting of interviews in September, additional analyses had been carried out with the survey data from the central Quality of School Life project, leading to a further refinement of the measure. Cognizance had also been taken of students' comments from the group discussions held in two case study schools (see Chapter 4). Some of the items from the version of the questionnaire administered to students in the case study schools had been discarded, so it was considered appropriate to eliminate these items also from later work with the case study data. Thus, the Status scale was left with six items, the Identity scale with seven items, the Adventure scale with eight items, and the Opportunity scale with seven items (including one transfer from the Adventure scale). The retained items are identified with an asterisk in Table 3.1. Table 3.2 gives the mean scores for agreement responses (expressed as percentages) in the domain scales in each of the four schools selected for further investigation.

A comparison of the agreement percentages showed that Year 10 was the crucial year for eliciting the most varied responses from schools. In Identity and Status the most extreme differences (23.9 and 19.5 respectively) were found between Year 10 students at School 1 (highest) and School 6 (lowest). Although the difference in mean scores on the Status scale was not as great as the difference on the Identity scale, the differences in response to specific items within the Status scale were considered to be of

Table 3.2 Agreement Percentages for Domain Scales in Four Schools

School	Scale	Year 9	Year 10	Year 11	Year 12
1	Status	51.5	64.3[a]	48.4*	54.5
	Identity	69.6	68.7[b]	51.7	64.3
	Adventure	47.3	46.4	33.3	41.9
	Opportunity	58.2	54.4	42.9	43.4
3	Status	41.4	53.7	59.8	60.6
	Identity	52.9	54.8	50.4	57.9
	Adventure	37.0	49.3[c]	54.4	54.6
	Opportunity	57.2	65.1[d]	55.5	54.1
4	Status	38.0	37.9	53.6	65.1
	Identity	46.9	46.1	58.4	56.5
	Adventure	32.5	18.2[c]	35.9	53.6
	Opportunity	51.4	35.1[d]	36.6	51.7
6	Status	50.6	44.8[a]	43.1	53.0
	Identity	53.2	44.8[b]	51.7	47.1
	Adventure	44.0	26.7	40.4	55.2
	Opportunity	55.2	43.4	48.4	47.9

Notes

(i) * Underlined figures represent the greatest within-school differences (read horizontally)

(ii) a-d represent the greatest year level differences between schools at Year 10 (read vertically)

consequence. In Adventure and Opportunity the differences (31.1 and 30.0 respectively) were most marked in Year 10 at School 3 (highest) and School 4 (lowest). The pairing of schools in this way reflects the total school pattern for the four domains depicted in Figure 3.2.

The second line of enquiry, the identification of the crucial domain within each school, did not work out quite as neatly as the between-schools identification. As we might have anticipated from the year level bar graph in Figure 3.2, the Identity domain resulted in reasonably uniform responses from the four year levels; there was more variation in the Opportunity domain, but not as much as in Adventure and Status. According to Table 3.2, the domains showing the greatest mean score differences between year levels in the four schools were as follows: School 1, Status (Year 10 highest, Year 11 lowest); School 3, Status (Year 11 highest, Year 9 lowest); School 4, Adventure (Year 12 highest, Year 10 lowest); School 6, Adventure (Year 12 highest, Year 10 lowest). The differences in the Adventure domain in Schools 4 and 6 were considered to be of consequence.

Characteristics of the Four Schools

It is apparent that, according to the evidence provided by these four schools, differences between these schools are greater in the learning acquisition areas than in the social development areas of schooling, and also that there is more variation in attitudes towards school among students from the low-scoring schools in the study than among students from high-scoring schools. A study of questionnaire scores for the retained items added to the individual pictures that were emerging of each of the four schools.

School 1: a suburban Catholic girls school. Listed below are items for which the average agreement response from at least three of the four year levels at the school was more than 10 per cent above the all schools average (or more than 10 per cent disagreement in the case of negatively expressed items).

School is a place where...

I really like to go (General Satisfaction)
I don't like to go (General Satisfaction)
teachers will not discuss the marks they give me (Opportunity)
I get to know myself better (Identity)
I learn a lot about myself (Identity)
other students listen to what I say (Identity)

The strong expression of agreement with these items seems to indicate that this is a school which engenders a general enthusiasm in its students, in which there is supportive interaction among students and between teachers and students, and which presents students with opportunities for the development of self-awareness.

One item elicited responses at three levels that fell at least 10 per cent below the all schools average: 'I can learn whatever I need to know'. Later discussions brought forward no ready explanation for this low level of response, other than the fact that this was one of the items which students felt was ambiguously phrased. Another item, 'teachers are friendly to me in class', drew responses from Year 11 and 12 students that were more than 20 per cent below the all schools average. From later discussions with students and teachers, it was apparent that the older students felt that 'friendly' was too informal and casual a term to be readily applicable to the nature of the teacher-student relationship in their school - 'concerned', 'caring', 'helpful' yes, but 'friendly' no, nor was it considered desirable.

School 3: a semi-rural, co-educational state high school. Items in which the agreement response from at least three year levels was more than 10 per cent above the all schools average are listed below.

School is a place where...

teachers are friendly to me in class (Adventure)

I have learned how to find whatever information I need (Adventure)

teachers listen to what I say (Adventure)

teachers are fair and just (Opportunity)

I feel I am a responsible person (Status)

I am not trusted to work on my own (Status)

other students are very friendly (Identity)

This appears to be a school which develops a spirit of independence in its students, and which provides strong teacher support. Year 9 students differed from the other levels in that their responses conveyed a certain lack of confidence in their teachers (later discussions showed that their criticism centred around one teacher, their form teacher), and an even greater lack of confidence in themselves.

There was less than average agreement at three of the four levels with the item 'people think I'm not very important', perhaps explained by the strong democratic ethos of the school in which 'big-noting' was frowned on. Some items concerned with competition and tests drew low levels of agreement from students, explained by the fact that these particular elements of schooling are absent from this school environment.

School 4: a suburban co-educational state high school. The agreement responses to two items fell at least 10 per cent below the all schools average for students in Years 9, 10 and 11.

School is a place...

teachers will not discuss the marks they give me (Opportunity)

learning is a lot of fun (Adventure)

In addition, Year 10 students produced markedly low scores in most Opportunity and all Adventure and Positive Affect items, indicating a profound disaffection from all learning acquisition aspects of the school environment; lower than average agreement by Year 9 and 10 students with some Identity and Status items pointed to the existence of a low self-image among these students. Year 12 students, on the other hand, responded more positively than their counterparts in other schools to most Positive Affect and Status items and to those Opportunity items concerning teachers.

This seems to be a school which provides a supportive and stimulating environment for Year 12 students and an environment that is singularly lacking in these qualities for students at other levels. As we will see in later chapters, this is a school that places great importance on its excellent Higher School Certificate results, an emphasis which seems to have (perhaps unexpected) repercussions lower down in the school.

School 6: an outer suburban state girls high school. Two items elicited agreement responses that were at least 10 per cent above the all schools average for students in Year 9, 11 and 12.

School is a place where...

teachers will not discuss the marks they give me (Opportunity)

teachers are friendly to me in class (Adventure)

However, Year 10 students fall below the all schools average in their responses to several items in each of the four domains, showing a low opinion of their teachers, a lack of confidence in their own ability, and a general lack of enthusiasm for school. Year 10, 11, and 12 students showed a lower level of agreement than their counterparts in other schools with those Status and Identity items concerning self-esteem (such as 'I feel important', 'I feel I am a worthwhile person').

This school did not present as distinct a set of characteristics as the other three schools chosen for further study, and in later discussions the students here were not able to articulate their feelings as well as did students from other schools. There is obviously a negative attitude to school among Year 10 students at this school; students at other levels, while acknowledging the support of teachers, seem to be lacking in self-confidence within the school environment.

Summary

What do all these pieces of information tell us about the Quality of School Life concept and the model of schooling we have developed?

We postulated that there would be differences in responses to the Quality of School Life questionnaire that could be ascribed to the year level, sex, and school of the student respondents.

We found that there were sex differences in the expected direction, with girls scoring consistently higher than boys, indicating that girls in the middle and upper levels of these secondary schools seem to derive more enjoyment, perceived benefit and satisfaction from their schooling than do boys.

Differences were apparent between schools, although they did not emerge in quite the way we had anticipated. We thought that individual domains might gather strong student support in some schools which would reflect the philosophical emphasis of the school - thus we might have a 'Status' school or an 'Adventure' school. This did not happen. Although the strength of the response varied from school to school, the pattern remained the same, with all schools favouring Identity above Opportunity, Status and Adventure. The two highest and lowest scoring schools were correspondingly strong and weak in all domains, but the responses in each school did show a tendency to favour

either the social development domains (Status and Identity) or the learning acquisition domains (Opportunity and Adventure), indicating that there may be some reflection in student responses of the educational philosophy of the school.

Differences were found between year levels, but in this case the response pattern did vary in the four domains. The socialization process (seen in the Identity responses) was obviously working well for the whole range of students, and the aspects of schooling represented by the Status and Adventure items showed a qualitative improvement as the student progressed through the school, evidenced in an increasing respect for and trust in students and better relationships with teachers. A different pattern emerged from the responses of ex-students who, compared to current students, rated the intrinsic worth and interest of their schooling (Adventure) higher, but saw its relevance to their post-school lives (Opportunity) as lower.

For several reasons, attention in this section has focused on only four of the seven Quality of School Life scales, the domains of schooling: the domains represent a venture into previously unexplored territory whereas the Satisfaction and Affect areas have been investigated in the quality of life research; the domains are a richer source of information (each containing 10 items) than the General Satisfaction (two items) or Affect (5 items each) scales; and more distinct patterns could be found in the domain items than in the Satisfaction or Affect items.

Overall, the information that we gathered from the administration of the Quality of School Life questionnaire in the seven schools confirmed our belief that the quality of school life concept is a useful basis for developing a measure of students' perceptions of schooling. In addition, the questionnaire outcomes gave an indication of aspects of the Quality of School Life measure that might need further thought and refinement (such as the rewriting of ambiguous items and items that are not applicable to some schools), and the need for more systematic research over a wider sample to investigate further the differences that emerged between schools and between year levels in the Quality of School Life.

Another outcome of this aspect of the case study was the school profile, built up from an examination of each school's responses to individual items within the seven scales (see Chapter 6 for examples). These profiles gave the schools an insight into features of the school which drew particular praise or criticism from their students and highlighted the differences in the perceptions of different age levels. For example, there was a great contrast in School 4, between Year 10 and Year 12 students - the former disliked school work and lacked confidence in their teachers and themselves, while the latter felt important and successful. In School 2 there was across-levels agreement that students were not treated with respect or given enough opportunity to discuss work with teachers, while in School 3 there was a general agreement that

student-teacher interaction was encouraged and student rights were considered important.

This was the sort of information we had hoped could be derived from the initial school profiles, and we felt that this justified us in proceeding to the next stage of the case study, which was to find out more about the four domains in a particular school context, and to investigate the processes of thought and feeling that led students to respond in the ways they did to the questionnaire in the high and low scoring schools. The investigation took the form of individual and group interviews and is discussed in the next two chapters.

CHAPTER 4

DISCUSSION GROUPS

As stated in Chapter 3, the main purpose of the group discussions was to obtain feedback on the Quality of School Life questionnaire which, it was hoped, would provide the researchers with the following information: the identification of items which students found difficult, irrelevant or ambiguous; whether student interpretations of key construct items were in accord with our theory; and whether there were any additional factors not included in the domains of the model that the students felt were relevant to their experience and the quality of their school lives. These group discussions also provided the researchers with an opportunity to observe a diversity of viewpoints on our dimensions of schooling within a particular school context, and the reasons underlying the divergent responses of students to these dimensions.

The selection of the two schools for the group discussions was based on the results of preliminary analysis of student responses to the Quality of School Life questionnaire, and on this criterion the two schools which presented the most striking contrasts in student responses to the various items were selected. The teachers from these schools were asked to choose a group of six students of mixed ability from each of the four year levels who would be prepared to discuss their views about the questionnaire and their school life with us. These discussions were carried out within one week of the administration of the Quality of School Life questionnaire; the discussions were taped and were of approximately half an hour's duration. Since it was not possible within the time limit to discuss all of the items on the questionnaire, our discussions with the students focused on the key items relating to the four domains of schooling to see how the students had interpreted these items and whether these interpretations were in accord with our underlying theory. Students were also asked to comment on the wording of the questionnaire and to identify any items that they felt were irrelevant or difficult to interpret.

In reporting the outcomes of these group discussions we will begin by examining the comments from the students at each year level from both schools on each of the four domains of schooling. The discussions with the students from Years 9 and 10 were not as informative as those with the higher grades, and it was felt that several of the students in this younger age group had not understood some of the key construct items, particularly those items related to Opportunity. It was also noted that the Year 9, 10 and 11 students from School 3 were a lot more forthcoming in their views and opinions about their school lives than their counterparts from School 4. In the discussions with the Year 10 students we observed that these students from both schools were noticeably more negative about their schooling experience than any of the other groups. In both

cases the focus of their complaints was an unpopular form teacher, and this preoccupation with the unpopularity of their form teachers affected the information they gave us.

The Four Domains of Schooling

Status

In our discussions on some of the Status items, particularly those items which dealt with the development of a sense of responsibility and importance (items 1 and 14), the Year 9 and 10 students from both schools felt that they were too young and their position in the school hierarchy too low for them to be given any responsibility, although they agreed students were given more responsibility as they went higher up the school. This feeling of lack of responsibility was less keenly felt by the students from School 3 who said that the freedom they were given at school did give them some sense of responsibility. Both groups agreed that feeling important was not relevant to them at their year level, particularly as far as their teachers were concerned. However, they did emphasize the role of their friends in making them feel important.

In the discussion with the Year 11 and 12 students on these items the Year 12 students from both schools agreed with the items but for different reasons. The students from School 4 commented that because of the high academic standards achieved in their school, they felt that it was up to them to maintain these standards and in doing so they were made to feel responsible. These students felt important because they were members of the class that was doing Higher School Certificate, and they felt they were treated with respect by teachers and other students because of this. It appeared that for those students in School 4 their sense of status could be attributed to being in the Higher School Certificate year rather more than to any personal feeling of responsibility or importance.

In contrast, the students from Years 11 and 12 from School 3 felt that the freedom they were given at these levels to make decisions about going to class, handing in work and arranging their own timetables encouraged them to feel responsible. They also felt that their relationship with their teachers encouraged them to feel responsible and important. As one student from Year 11 commented, 'because you are treated as an equal and not just as a student by the teachers this makes you feel as though you matter'. The students from Year 12 said that feeling important was irrelevant in their school as everyone was treated the same and therefore it was 'not important to feel important'; however these students did say that in their relationship with their teachers, where they were treated with respect, they were made to feel important.

In the discussions concerning student rights, item 42, the students from all levels at School 3 felt they had a lot of rights, for example, the right to smoke, the right to decide

if they want to go to class, and the right to take part in planning their work programs; in contrast, all of the students from School 4 felt that they had no rights.

Identity

In the discussions on the items in the Identity domain the main items discussed were those which dealt with the concept of self-knowledge (items 24 and 37). From these discussions it appeared that most of the students at School 4 did not fully understand nor appreciate the meaning of this concept and many of the students thought that this aspect was not an important part of their schooling experience. A Year 12 student commented that it was hard to be an individual at school because you had to fit in with your peer group; also, that it was only at the higher levels that you developed the ability to think about yourself. Many of these students, particularly those from the lower levels, were reluctant to talk about or express their feelings on this subject.

In contrast, the students at all levels from School 3 felt that this aspect, getting to know yourself better, was a very important part of their school lives, and they emphasized the role of their teachers and friends in helping them to achieve this. A Year 12 student said, 'More than anything else, this school has to do with developing as a person, finding out about yourself and what you want to do, not just working for no purpose. You are learning about yourself all the time, and you are learning about other people and how to cope with different situations. The students at School 3 said that there was no pecking order or physical barriers put between forms at their school; as one student commented 'everyone is friends here'.

This emphasis on the role of friends in helping them to get to know themselves was absent among students from School 4; their attitude to this point was summed up by the comment from one student who said that 'We are not put up if we've got a lot of friends, we are only put up if we pass all our subjects'. Another student from this school commented that their school was not a close-knit school and that there was not much mixing between classes.

Students from School 3 felt that the way in which their school was run, where no pressure was put on them to conform, enabled them to develop as individuals. However, these students were aware that this system would not suit everyone; several of these students said they knew that some people would not be able to cope with the independance and flexibility given to students in their school, but they felt that, for them, it helped increase their knowledge of themselves.

The response of the students from Year 12 at School 4 to the self-knowledge items was quite different; they felt that it was impossible to be an individual in their school because of peer group pressure to conform. In response to being asked if they thought that their school created an environment for them to get to know themselves one student commented that it was not something you thought about. Throughout the discussions

with the students from School 4 constant references were made to 'getting HSC' and maintaining the high academic standards achieved by this school. This preoccupation with attaining the Higher School Certificate appeared to restrict their interpretation of these items; for example, in our discussions with the Year 12 students on item 24 one student commented that 'most people get HSC then find out what they want to do with themselves'.

The Identity items had been written in two main categories, the first concerned with feelings of self-awareness and self-worth (for example, 'I get to know myself better' and 'I feel I am a worthwhile person'), the second concerned with other people's responses to the individual (for example, 'I am popular with other students' and 'other students are very friendly'). Student discussion of the Identity concept often drew these two categories together; students felt that interaction with friends helped them to develop as individuals and increased their understanding of other people. This additional dimension of Identity was included in later development of the measure.

Adventure

Our discussions with the students on the Adventure domain of schooling focused on those items which dealt with student-teacher relationships (items 27, 34 and 40) and noticeable differences between year levels and schools were observed in the responses to these items.

With the exception of Year 10, the students from School 3 were more enthusiastic and positive about their relationship with their teachers than their counterparts from School 4.

The students from Year 10 in both schools had an unpopular form teacher and this had a negative effect on the discussion of these items. The students from School 4 felt that their grade had the worst teachers: as one student commented, 'they keep the bad ones for us'; others felt that their teachers were 'only here for the money'. The Year 10 students from School 3 did not feel quite so negative about their teachers but they were less enthusiastic than any of the other year levels in this school.

The students from all other levels at School 3 were unanimous in their agreement with these items and were keen to elaborate on their enthusiasm for their teachers. Several of these students who previously had been at other schools said that the teachers there were different because 'here they treat you as an equal' and 'they seem to understand what it's like to be a student'; and they agreed that it was the teachers who made this school. Other comments included 'they are teachers who want to be teachers, not just here for the money - they can be approached any time'. All of these students felt that the teachers took a personal interest in helping them not just with their schoolwork but also with any personal problems they might have; this was exemplified by the fact that the teachers gave them their home telephone numbers so that students

could contact them when they wished. None of these sentiments were expressed by the Year 9 and Year 11 students from School 4 who were reluctant to discuss the subject and their only comment on these items was that 'it depends on the teacher'. The students from Year 12 at School 4 agreed with these items and the majority of them felt that they had a good relationship with their teachers; the teachers were their friends and they called them by their first names. However one student did comment that they sometimes felt that their teachers were only interested in them getting their Higher School Certificate and that their interest did not extend beyond this.

Opportunity

As mentioned earlier it was felt by the researchers that several of the students, particularly those from School 4, had difficulty in interpreting the items within this domain. The students from all levels at School 3 found those items which referred to marks and exams (items 12, 35, 41 and 50) irrelevant to them as they were not given marks and did not have exams; assessment was by written comments on their work. All of the students from this school commented that they were glad that they did not have marks at their school and they were sympathetic to students in other schools who did have to sit exams 'as it must make kids who get low marks feel really bad'. All of these students showed a non-competitive outlook and several of them commented favourably about the lack of competitive feeling amongst students in their school. The comments made by the students from School 4 presented a contrasting viewpoint: from Year 9 upwards these students were already starting to feel the pressure of having to work hard to maintain the high academic standards achieved in their school. Marks and exams were a recurring theme throughout the discussions with students from this school.

With the Year 9 and 10 levels from both schools there were problems in interpreting those items which dealt with the relevance of learning (items 11, 13 and 47). The majority of these students failed to grasp the meaning of the underlying theory of this construct; they were unable to consider the wider implications of their education and could only relate it to their own particular vocational needs, for example, 'I think I'd like to be a secretary so I should be able to do typing at this school'.

In the discussions with the Year 11 and 12 students from School 3 these students were able to interpret the meaning of this construct within a wider context than their counterparts from School 4. The students from School 3 felt that their learning experience at school would be very useful to them later on, not just in terms of academic knowledge but also in learning how to relate to people. They said that because of the emphasis put on communication skills they felt that this gave them confidence to cope with any problems when they left school. These students felt that the encouragement they were given by teachers to express their opinions and take part in class discussions was a better preparation for the outside world than doing a lot of written work. These

sentiments were absent from the Year 11 and 12 students at School 4 who felt that a lot of what they learnt at school was useless; they had to learn in order to pass the Higher School Certificate but after that they would forget it. Several of these students commented on the lack of emphasis on spoken communicative skills at their school. As one student commented 'You learn a lot at this school in terms of knowledge but that doesn't mean that once we are out of here we will be able to cope'. Another student commented that there was not much emphasis put on communication in the school. Other students felt that there should be more courses available in human relations; all of these students appeared to be very aware of the lack of this aspect in their schooling.

Several of the Year 12 students from School 3 felt that the way in which their school operated, its flexibility in allowing the students to arrange their own timetables, and the absence of 'spoon-feeding' made them learn to be independent and confident in coping with most situations; they felt this was a good preparation for adult life.

Comments on Questionnaire Items

With regard to general comments on the wording of the questionnaire, the majority of the students felt happy with most of the items; however there were some criticisms.

The Year 9 students at both schools did not like the wording of item 3 'I am popular with other students' and item 28 'I feel proud of myself' as they thought it made them sound vain to answer in the affirmative to these items.

The Year 10 students were unhappy with the wording of item 10 'I feel on top of the world' as it was an unfamiliar phrase to the majority of them. Puzzlement was also expressed about the meaning of the phrases 'go my way' and 'work my way' (items 8 and 21).

These students were also critical of the word 'always' in item 33 'Schoolwork is always interesting' because as they pointed out schoolwork can never be always interesting only, possibly, sometimes; this comment was echoed by students from Year 11.

The students from Year 11 encountered no difficulties in understanding the questionnaire although some of the students from School 3 said that the questions were good but they felt that for some of the items their answers did not always fit neatly into one of the five given categories.

The majority of Year 12 students disliked the wording of 'I feel on top of the world' and several of the students from School 3 felt that some of the Negative Affect items - concerned with feeling upset, lonely, and depressed - were too personal and did not have much to do with school. They felt that outside influences could make them feel upset or unhappy and that it could not be directly attributed to something that happened at school.

The outcomes of these group discussions can be summarized in the light of the four main objectives of this part of the study: the identification of problem items and of additional factors relevant to the quality of school life, and the investigation of student interpretations of the key construct items and the reasons underlying the responses to these items. As a result of student criticisms some items were changed when the second version of the Quality of School Life measure was being developed, and other items were removed, for example, 'I feel on top of the world' was changed to 'I feel great', and item 21, 'I can't get things to work my way' was deleted because the colloquial phraseology of these two items was unfamiliar to students. Two items which referred to 'winning' and 'competitions' (items 29 and 43) were deleted because of their inapplicability to some schools. Some items were changed because of student objections to qualifying words like 'always' and 'very', so that items 33 and 36 became 'I am interested in the work we do in class' and 'I feel lonely'.

Because of the restricted interpretation by students in the younger age groups of those items in the Opportunity domain which dealt with the relevance of learning, the emphasis in this domain was changed to 'recognition of achievement'; students were able to appreciate the concept of school achievement as an identifiable stepping stone to future achievement. New items were written which emphasized student achievement, for example, 'I know I can reach a satisfactory standard in my work' and 'learning is easy for me'.

One comment frequently made by students concerned the confusion caused by negatively worded items, particularly in trying to marry the negatively worded items to the correct agree/disagree response category - a process which seemed to involve a double jump in interpretation. As a result of this criticism, all negatively worded items were either deleted or rephrased in the second version of the questionnaire. A further difficulty commented on by students concerned those items expressed in general terms, such as 'students have very few rights' - students were uncertain whether they were meant to reply on their own behalf or on behalf of the whole student body. In the second questionnaire these items were deleted.

Except for those items in the Opportunity domain and for students at School 4 who had problems in interpreting the self-knowledge items in the Identity domain, the researchers felt that the majority of the students had accurately interpreted the key construct items in accord with the underlying theory.

The students felt that the key factors included in our model were relevant to their experience and the quality of their school lives and were unable to suggest any additional factors that affected school life. Student discussion of the Identity concept did lead to the inclusion of an extra dimension related to the interaction of self and others, exemplified in new items such as 'mixing with other people helps me to understand myself' and 'I learn to get along with other people'.

During the group discussions differing viewpoints on the four dimensions of schooling emerged. These differences appeared to be stronger between schools than within schools. From student comments it would seem that the most influential factor in affecting students perceptions of the quality of their school lives was in their relationship with the teachers. For the student, a positive teacher-student relationship created a favourable environment enabling the student to experience a high degree of satisfaction in the four domains of schooling as described in the model.

The discussions with students about the reasons that prompted their responses to the questionnaire both illuminated and reinforced the different pictures of the two schools that had emerged from the questionnaire analysis. Further examination of this process - the various factors in the school environment that shaped student perceptions - was possible through the interviews with individual students in the four selected schools.

CHAPTER 5

INTERVIEWS WITH STUDENTS

Student responses to the questionnaire were tangible outcomes of the quality of life created in each school. To take the case study a stage further we wanted to examine more closely the processes that led to these outcomes, the unseen roots that produce the visible plant called 'the quality of school life'. It would be useful to know, for instance, why a student strongly agreed with the statement 'School is a place where I feel important' - was it the attitude of the teachers, his friends, or his achievements that produced this feeling? We thought the answers to such questions would give us a clearer picture of the four domains of schooling and enable us to assemble more detailed Quality of School Life profiles for the four schools involved.

This chapter describes the method of selection of students for interview, and the interview procedure adopted; accounts are given of the student interviews, first at the Year 10 level for all four domains, and then the year levels within each school where the greatest difference in domain scores was found. The chapter concludes with a review statement that draws together the findings of Chapters 4 and 5.

Selection of Students

To give us maximum coverage of students' perceptions of the four domains we chose representatives of the most extreme views in each case, as explained in Chapter 3 (p.13). Thus, we found that the greatest differences in mean score responses to the Opportunity and Adventure scales were at the Year 10 level in Schools 3 and 4, while the greatest differences in mean score responses to the Status and Identity scales were also at the Year 10 level, but in Schools 1 and 6. The greatest within-school differences in the four schools were found in the Status and Adventure domains.

The primary focus in the interview phase of the study was on the 'representative' student referred to in the previous paragraph, but we felt it was also important to counterbalance the views of these students with other students from the same class who held opposing views. This would give us an answer to the question, 'The majority of students in this class responded very positively to this domain of schooling, but what were the reasons for the relative dissatisfaction of the minority?'

For each of the between-school and within-school investigations, we selected up to four students to represent the characteristic response pattern for each class, and up to three students to represent the opposing viewpoint. The criterion for selection was that the student had recorded a higher degree of agreement or disagreement in the relevant domain than in any of the other three domains. This method of selection would provide

some guarantee that the student to be interviewed was not just a student with an extremely positive or negative general attitude, but one who felt particularly strongly about the domain in question.

Interview Procedure

Arrangements were made with the four schools to interview the selected students in a half-day session of 10-15 minute individual interviews. Some students were absent on the appointed day, but we were able to interview at least three 'representative' students and two 'opposing' students for each category. Each interview was tape-recorded.

At the beginning of the interviews the students were briefly reminded of the questionnaire and told why we wanted to explore the quality of school life concept further. They were handed a sheet containing six items from the relevant domain, the items chosen to represent the essential elements of the construct under consideration. The students were told which items they had strongly agreed or disagreed with and asked if they still felt the same way, and then the reasons for the continuing or changed attitudes were probed. Most of the students maintained their original stance, some had modified their views, and a few had developed a different point of view and expressed surprise at their original responses, but after some thought were able to explain the change. Only one student said 'I didn't really take the questionnaire seriously'. A few students were in the unique position of recording the highest degree of agreement in the class with one scale and the lowest with another. Sometimes comments were made that referred to other domains, and these were noted when the interviews were analysed.

In the following pages we present the information culled from the interviews about the domains of schooling, the nature of students' perceptions, and the factors within the school environment that contribute most to the quality of students' lives.

It may be helpful at this stage to define again the four domains of schooling as we conceived them.

Status refers to the student experience of acquiring self-confidence through being accorded prestige, exemplified by items dealing with feelings of importance, responsibility, and respect from others.

Identity entails the development of self-awareness in the student and the ability to interact with others in the context of the school environment, and is exemplified by items concerned with self-knowledge and the friendliness of other students.

Adventure encompasses the student experience of involvement in learning achieved through self-motivation and support in the learning situation, exemplified by items that concern interest in schoolwork, satisfaction derived from schoolwork, and the expression of support from teachers.

Opportunity refers to student feelings of adequacy in the learning situation and a resultant confidence in future achievement, helped by meritocratic treatment in the classroom, exemplified by items that deal with the ability to cope with schoolwork, the usefulness of learning, and the fairness of teachers.

Between-School Differences: Year 10

The four domains are discussed under separate headings: within each domain the relevant characteristics of the most supportive and least supportive schools are described, including the views of the students chosen to counter-balance the prevailing trends.

The difference in the level of agreement with items in Identity and Status for Schools 1 and 6 was 23.9 and 19.5 per cent respectively, while the difference between Schools 3 and 4 in Adventure and Opportunity was 31.6 and 30.0 per cent.

Status

The comments from students focused on three items, those concerned with acting responsibly, feeling important, and being treated with respect. Students from School 1, representing a higher degree of agreement with the items, had something to say about each of the three items, but School 6 students were almost solely concerned with explaining why they did not feel important.

'Acting responsibly'. School 1 students felt they acted responsibly because they were treated as adults by the teachers and responded by behaving in an adult and responsible manner. The students felt that their teachers were consciously preparing them for the time when they would be out on their own. Of the two dissenting students from School 1, one modified her statement by saying that some teachers did make her feel responsible, and the other put her negative response down to the fact that she had been given a detention on the day the questionnaire was administered.

'Feeling important'. The students at School 1 all said that they were made to feel important because they were treated as individuals by the staff - 'All the students matter to the teachers here. It doesn't matter if you are an E grade student, they'll try and help you along', 'You're never made to feel left out by teachers or students', 'The teachers make you feel that what you think matters' (this comment was made by a supposedly negative student). Another student, who had said she did not feel important or confident, explained that it was not the school's fault but just her nature - 'This school makes you feel confident more than any other school could'. Student opinion in School 6 was that nobody was given really special attention, that some teachers just dismissed some students' work, and that it was the students who did well in sport that felt important. It was commented that students who did not do well in tests were teased by

other students, and that the non-Australian students were excluded by the Australian students. One girl had modified her views and felt that more teachers seemed interested in what she was doing than at the beginning of the year.

'Being treated with respect'. Students in School 1 felt that all students were respected at their school and that 'the way you are treated is the way you'll respond'. Student teasing was mentioned again in School 6, and the comment was made that 'Teachers are more important than you are, so you respect them, but you don't expect to be respected back'.

To summarize the differences between Year 10 students in the two schools: in School 1, the self-confidence of students was enhanced by the encouragement and attention given to them by the teachers; because the students were treated with consideration and respect they behaved in a responsible manner. In School 6, low achievement in sport or work seemed to have a belittling effect on students; there was not a marked feeling of mutual support between students and teachers.

Identity

Student comment centred on three items: 'School is a place where ... I learn a lot about myself; I feel proud to be a student; other students are very friendly'. School 1 students had more to say about the items than School 6 students.

'Learn about myself'. School 1 students itemized ways in which they learnt about themselves - they felt they learnt by their mistakes, learnt what they were capable of doing and how they fitted in with other people. One student disagreed and said that even in religion they dealt with external not internal things. School 6 students felt that they learnt more about the subjects than they did than about themselves, and that their school was not a place where you came to learn about yourself - although, on reflection, they thought that a school should help you to do this.

'Proud to be a student'. Students in School 1 spoke of a feeling of closeness to others, 'like being in a family', of pride in the heritage of the school, and of the good opinion of the school held by people outside it. In partial disagreement, one student said she was looking forward to leaving school, and another felt frustrated because the Students Representative Council was so powerless. School 6 students felt they would take more pride in the school if teachers spent more time with individual students, and one student said 'Most people don't feel proud to be students, do they?'

'Friendly students'. Students from both schools said that in an all-girls school, girls tended to be more catty and to fight more. Students in School 1 were very positive about the social attitude of other students - 'The girls are really friendly and supportive', 'We know everyone, not just in our year, but in the whole senior school', 'Everyone gets

along with everyone else, that's one of the things about this school'. They commented also that teachers were concerned and involved with students, and that the school emphasized in its religious education 'that we should accept other people as they are, and students generally do'. A student who had shown a negative attitude at the beginning of the year explained that she had in the past had trouble fitting in with other students because of different interests, but that she was now learning to be more adaptable, and that being on the school magazine committee had brought her closer to other students. At School 6, one student said she had a lot of friends, but could not elaborate further; an Australian-born student said 'People don't want to be friendly with, for example, Turkish kids because they're different; and the school doesn't really try to make you mix with other people'.

To summarize the differences between Year 10 students in the two schools: the analogy of a family seemed applicable to School 1 - a feeling of closeness and support that crossed barriers of age and position, the consciousness of a heritage; students also felt the school offered them the opportunity to acquire self-knowledge and acceptance of other people. Pride in the school and the acquisition of self-knowledge were not experiences connected with the school environment in School 6; there appeared to be some racial barriers among students, and a lack of encouragement to learn to accept other people.

Adventure

Students in Schools 3 and 4, who were the interview subjects for the Adventure and Opportunity domains, had most to say about the Adventure items concerned with being interested in schoolwork, getting satisfaction from the work and teachers taking a personal interest in helping with school work.

'Interest in the work'. Students at School 3 said that they found the work interesting because they were given plenty of choices of things to do, and because there was a freer approach to work at their school - 'You can do the work by yourself, it's not forced on you'. One dissenter said that it was not the teacher's fault that the work was not interesting; it was because he found some of the topics boring and pointless. Several students in School 4 found the work boring too, either because they had difficulty in understanding it or because some teachers just worked out of books and did not seem interested themselves.

'Satisfaction from school work'. One student from School 4 objected to the repetitive nature of the work - 'Too much of the work we do is a rerun of what we've done before and that's not very interesting or satisfying'. In contrast, a student from School 3 commented that 'when you just copy things off the board you don't really feel you've done something by yourself. But if you do an essay and go down to the library to

find out things, you feel like you've done something. And that's how you mostly work here'.

'Teachers take a personal interest in helping'. All students from School 3, even those who expressed negative viewpoints in other items, came out strongly in support of their teachers - 'The teachers have a good relationship with all students and will talk to you about any problems you have, in school or outside', 'They're not just teachers, they're friends', 'They really help you to do what interests you', 'They try to get everybody to do a little bit of talking, not just a couple of people doing all the talking'. Students in School 4 were a little ambivalent; they felt that some teachers were helpful, but most were remote and unapproachable out of class time, and in class 'you've always got to go out to them to ask for help, they never come to you' and 'some of the teachers put themselves on a higher level and that doesn't help much'. Three students in School 4 said that if they were able to change anything in the school they would change the teachers' attitudes so that there would be better teacher-student relationships.

To summarize the differences between Year 10 students in the two schools: a free and varied approach to learning and a concern for all students characterized the teaching in School 3 and elicited interested participation from students in the learning experience. Student interest was stultified in School 4 by boring and repetitive work and lack of attention from teachers.

Opportunity

The three items that drew comments from students were 'I know how to cope with the work', 'I can see that what I learn will be useful to me later on', and 'Teachers are fair and just'. As with Adventure, students had most to say about the item concerning teachers.

'Cope with the work'. A student in School 3 said that the reason he could cope with the work was that he was not subjected to pressure in any form, which eased his worry. Students in School 4 found it hard to cope for various reasons: 'I don't think it's me, I think it's the way things are taught. They could be more helpful to you and explain things better'; 'It's hard because if you do your best the teachers just say you have to do better'; 'It would be good if we had more guidance in how to cope'.

'Things that will be useful'. Students from the two schools focused on different types of 'useful things'; in School 4 students spoke of academic learning and in School 3 of social skills. One student in School 4 felt that Science and Mathematics would be useful to him, while others thought that many of their subjects were useless and irrelevant. A student in School 3 said 'The most useful things I've learnt are to be responsible, to have confidence in myself, and to relate to people. What good is it if you're very brainy in Maths if you can't communicate with people. Here you learn to do

both'. Others also referred to the importance of learning how to relate to people, and one said 'I don't intend to leave school now, but if I did I feel I could get on because of the good two-way relationship we've had with teachers - I can now go out and talk to anyone'.

'Teachers are fair'. A couple of students at School 4 thought that teachers were 'mostly fair', but most felt that teachers did not treat them fairly, and the unfairness was manifested in a number of forms: 'The teachers make you feel inferior, they treat you as real low-class things'; 'Teachers have got their views and you can't argue. If you disagree with them they get mad at you'; 'They haven't got the time to give you. They only like people who are good at their work'; 'Everyone would get along a lot better if the teachers tried to work with us as well as us working with them'. On the other hand, the students in School 3 felt that justice did prevail in their classrooms. Some examples of their comments are: 'If you've done something wrong, the teachers take time to explain it properly'; 'They spend time with you out of class as well as in class. You are treated as an individual'; 'At other schools it's run like the teachers are the kings and we're the poor people, but here it isn't, we're sort of equal'.

To summarize the differences between Year 10 students in the two schools: School 3 students felt that teachers were open-minded and equable in their treatment of individual students, and stressed the future value to them of communication skills learnt at the school. An autocratic approach characterized much of the teaching experienced in School 4, and students felt that much of their learning would not be useful to them later on.

Within-School Differences

The findings are presented in the same manner as in the preceding section, under domain and item headings. Only two domains are discussed, Status and Adventure; it so happened that the greatest differences in mean scores between year levels in the two high-scoring schools (1 and 3) lay in the Status domain, and the greatest differences in the low-scoring schools (4 and 6) were in the Adventure domain. The year level differences were less marked in the high-scoring schools (in percentage agreement of 15.9 and 18.4) than in the low-scoring schools (differences of 35.4 and 28.5).

In two cases where Year 10 was involved we used the information from interviews taped for the between-schools comparison, reported in previous sections of this chapter.

Status: School 1, Year 10 and Year 11

Although the Year 11 students showed the lowest level of agreement with Status items, they had far more positive than negative comments to make about the operation of this construct in their school environment, and tended to attribute their critical responses to

factors other than the influence of the school. The items under consideration were those concerned with feeling responsible and important.

'Acting responsibly'. To recapitulate the Year 10 comments: these students felt that they were treated as equals by the teachers and that they responded to the teachers' expectations of them by acting responsibly. Of the Year 11 students, one felt she acted according to her own personal standards although she acknowledged that she was influenced by the school's emphasis on responsibility; another student said she sometimes frittered her time away and was too lazy to become involved in committees, both of which actions she felt showed a lack of responsibility; a third student commented that 'some rules restrict you, but when you think about it, it's for your own good'.

'Feeling important'. Students from Year 10 and Year 11 agreed that all students mattered to the teachers in their school, that all were treated as individuals (helped by the small numbers in the classes), and that other students were supportive as well as teachers. One Year 11 student explained that the teachers were helping her to regain the confidence lost in first term because of absence, which had led her to respond negatively to the questionnaire; another Year 11 student who did not consider herself important said that she was 'just the sort of person who likes to be in the background'.

Some general comments on the school made by the students referred to its caring atmosphere, the underlying emphasis on Christian values, the high academic standard, and the feeling of a living tradition that managed to incorporate the new while maintaining the old.

Status: School 3, Year 9 and Year 11

The lower level of agreement in the questionnaire responses of Year 9 students were explained in part by the difficulties experienced by this class with a particular teacher; later in the year the teacher was given a different teaching allocation which led to some modification in students' attitudes in the interviews. Even so, the most important factor in establishing status for these younger students seemed to be the attitude of peers rather than teachers.

'Acting responsibly'. Year 11 students felt they acted responsibly because the teachers trusted them and put the onus of responsibility on to the student. Two students contrasted this school with their previous schools: 'At the other school they had ridiculous rules. The rules they have here they have for good reasons'; 'At my old school nobody cared about work or the school because the teachers weren't much help, and the school grounds were a mess, and all the girls wanted was to get out of school and get married. Here the teachers help you, the school is so clean, and the students seem more mature and can discuss things, and it all makes you want to work'. Some Year 9 students

felt that they were stopped from acting responsibly by their friends who did not want to work. One Year 9 student commented that 'people outside think it's a slack school but it's not. You learn to be responsible here'.

'Feeling important'. The prevailing feeling among Year 11 students was that it was the teachers who made them feel important because of their friendly and concerned attitude - 'The teachers understand that everyone is different', 'They make you feel welcome, will talk to you and help you in their own time', 'The teachers treat you all the same, as a person not just a stupid little school kid'. Year 9 students felt that it was mostly their friends rather than the teachers who made them feel important.

'Being treated with respect'. Year 9 and Year 11 students agreed that the teachers in their school did treat them with respect. Two Year 11 comments were that 'The teachers respect your work in class and they respect your habits and interests out of class', and 'The teachers treat you as a person - at my other school the kids were just like ants'. There were references at both year levels to respect and friendliness at their own year level but some friction between higher and lower forms.

Some general comments made by students about the school included the emphasis on the development of independence, a knowledge of oneself and one's capabilities, the importance of communication, and the lack of emphasis on competition. There were numerous references to the hostile attitude of outsiders towards the school - 'You hear dreadful stories about the school, and everyone is scared in Grade 6 before they come here' - which made the students want to spring to the school's defence and dispel the myths.

Adventure: School 6, Year 10 and Year 12

'Interest in work'. Year 12 students agreed that the work was interesting, but their interest derived from varied sources - the subject content, self-motivation, the teachers, the subjects' relevance to life out of school. A couple of Year 10 students found the work interesting, one because of the teachers, the other because of her father's influence on her, but other Year 10 students felt that the subjects were of no use to them, that the work was too repetitive, and that 'the work is not interesting because the teachers choose the subjects and the curriculum for you - our wishes are ruled out'.

'Teachers take a personal interest in helping'. Year 12 students all felt that the teachers in Year 12 were very helpful and personally interested in their students ('maybe because they want a high pass rate') to a greater extent than they had been at other year levels. They did not feel there was much time for discussion or expression of opinion - 'It's all laid out in a certain way and that's how it's got to be if you want to pass'. Year 10 student opinion was divided - some felt that the teachers tried to explain things and help students, but others felt that the teachers were not friendly, did not have time to

give individual attention, were impatient with slow workers, and did not communicate well with students.

Adventure: School 4, Year 10 and Year 12

The difference between Year 12 and Year 10 students in School 4 in the Adventure domain was the largest in any scale in any of the four schools.

'Interest in work'. Year 12 students agreed that they found the work more interesting in the current year than in previous years, which they attributed to a change in teachers' attitudes as well as subject content and self-motivation. In addition, they were conscious that they were at the culminating point of their student careers in a school where great emphasis was placed on academic achievement. Even students on whom this academic responsibility lay rather heavily at the beginning of the year (at the time of questionnaire administration) had settled down by mid-year and were finding the work more interesting. One student still felt a sense of unease - 'I sort of feel like a victim of this school's academic reputation; if you fail you're letting the school down'. However, the view of the majority of Year 12 students is contained in the following comment: 'The teachers in HSC treat you as more than just a student, which makes learning more interesting. In the lower forms there's no communication with teachers, but it's different in HSC because the school largely relies on its academic record. Now the teachers really care about you. I don't think students at other schools get as much out of their HSC year as we do here'. Students in Year 10 thought much of the work was boring and repetitive, and some found it difficult to understand; they felt that the teachers did not try hard enough to make the work interesting for them.

'Teachers take a personal interest in helping'. According to one Year 12 student, 'The teachers help you because they want you to get through'; others said again that there was a much closer and more fruitful relationship between teachers and students in Year 12 than in other years, although there was not much contact with teachers out of class except for specific consultation about work problems: 'There should be more social involvement between teachers and students. I know we haven't really got the time, which is a pity, because it would be really good to get to know the teachers better'. Year 10 students felt that some teachers treated the students as inferior beings, were inaccessible, and did not take a personal interest in their students.

General comments from students all centred on the school's emphasis on academic achievement and a high Higher School Certificate pass rate; this seemed to create a climate of success and reassurance in Year 12, but it engendered feelings of resentment and dissatisfaction in the lower forms.

Review

Through the group discussions (described in Chapter 4) and the individual interviews we hoped to obtain information about the processes of schooling that produce student perceptions of the quality of their school lives. The information that we acquired has given us some answers, briefly summarized below, to the following questions: What are the key factors in the school environment that contribute to students' perceptions of the four domains of schooling? What more can we find out about differences in perceptions between year levels? What are the factors in the environments of Schools 1 and 3 that produce such relatively high levels of student satisfaction, and, in Schools 4 and 6, lower levels of student satisfaction?

Domains of Schooling

Status. The respect and trust of teachers, the support of other students and friends were the major factors that contributed to students' feelings of prestige and self-assurance. Apposite school rules, the assumption of leadership roles, and participation in curriculum planning also played some part.

Identity. The school's reputation and tradition gave rise to students' feelings of pride in their school. Awareness of self and others was acquired through the encouragement of personal development by teachers, having the opportunity to explore the nature and extent of one's capabilities, and learning acceptance and tolerance of other people.

Adventure. Self-motivation in learning was created and maintained by teachers catering for individual needs, offering a range of activities, varying methods of presentation, encouraging individual initiative, and being available to students both in and out of class.

Opportunity. To enable students to qualify for future opportunities, students needed to acquire academic and social skills that would be relevant to life in the world outside school, and they needed teachers who were patient, open-minded, and even-handed in their treatment of students.

Year Level Differences

Status. Feelings of importance and responsibility were governed mainly by the attitudes of friends and other students in Years 9 and 10, but teachers and personal academic standing had most influence on students in Years 11 and 12.

Identity. Students at all four levels seemed to be equally conscious of the effect of the school environment on the development of self-awareness, awareness of others, and identification with the school.

Adventure. More interest was expressed in work by students at higher levels (particularly Year 12) than at lower levels; interest at Year 12 was derived from several sources (teachers, subject content, subject relevance, self-motivation), while the attitude of teachers was the principal factor governing the level of interest in younger students. All students at Year 12 expressed confidence in their teachers, but students at other levels tended to be ambivalent about their relationship with teachers.

Opportunity. Year 12 students were more critical than students at other levels of the relevance of their school experience to adult life; these older students were far more likely than those below them to have established an interactive relationship with teachers in the classroom.

Between-School Differences

Status. Student feelings of satisfaction in this domain were gauged by the extent to which feelings of personal importance and a sense of responsibility were encouraged in the schools. In Schools 1 and 3, the high scoring schools, students' feelings of personal importance were felt at all year levels; such feelings stemmed from the teachers' knowledge and understanding of each individual in their care and from the support of other students. In Schools 4 and 6, the low scoring schools, feelings of personal importance were ascribed to certain individuals only: in School 6, personal importance was linked to sporting or academic success; in School 4 it was directly related to academic performance at Year 12, leaving students at other levels feeling somewhat inadequate and deprived of support. To students in Schools 4 and 6, the development of a sense of responsibility was not an essential part of their school experience, but students in Schools 1 and 3 felt they were encouraged to develop a sense of responsibility through the presence of sensible rules, the trust shown in them by teachers, and, in School 3, participation in the planning of their education.

Identity. In this domain, the development of self-awareness and the socialization process were the measured factors that contributed to the satisfaction of students. The concept of the school as an appropriate environment for increasing self-knowledge was foreign to the thinking of students in Schools 4 and 6, but students in School 3, who had achieved particularly high scores in this domain stressed the importance placed on personal development in their school and were aware that through their school lives they were constantly learning about themselves and how they could relate to other people. With regard to the friendliness of other students, students in School 4 felt that theirs was not a close-knit school and that academic progress was more important than friendship; on the other hand, School 1 students regarded themselves as a family and felt that the religious background of the school fostered an understanding of other people, and School 3 students, despite some inter-form clashes, felt that theirs was a democratically based and accepting community.

Adventure. Student satisfaction in the Adventure domain depended on interest manifested in school work and support provided by teachers in the learning situation. At both the low scoring schools, work interest and teacher support were commonly found only at Year 12, while students at other levels found the work often dull and irrelevant, and they reported varied reactions from teachers - some they found helpful and friendly, others uninterested, intolerant, and inaccessible. In the high scoring schools there was a more uniform response across year levels: students in School 1 felt that their enjoyment of learning was enhanced by the staff's policy of keeping classes small and catering for the individual needs of students; students in School 3 felt they benefited from the freer approach to learning in their school, varied teaching methods, and the strong and supportive interest of the teachers in all aspects of their students' lives.

Opportunity. The creation of opportunities for future success was dependent on feelings of student satisfaction with the relevance of the learning experiences they encountered, and the fairness of teachers. As far as relevant learning was concerned, the difference between high and low scoring schools was not in the ability of the school to provide them with appropriate academic qualifications, but in equipping them with wider-ranging skills: students at School 4 felt that they acquired a lot of knowledge but that much of it would be irrelevant later on, and they bemoaned the lack of training in communication skills; students in School 3 felt that their school equipped them well for the outside world by training them to be independent and to communicate with other people, and by giving them the opportunity to take part in work experience programs. Opinions about the fairness of teachers matched other student perceptions of teacher behaviour - students in Schools 4 and 6 felt that some teachers were fair minded but others were unduly superior and intolerant, while students in Schools 1 and 3 found their teachers patient and understanding.

CHAPTER 6

FEEDBACK TO SCHOOLS

One of the aims of the case study was to feed back information to the schools about students' perceptions of the quality of their school lives, and to note the outcomes of the feedback. One of the characteristics of a case study is that it may be seen as a 'step to action', beginning in a world of action and contributing to it (Adelman et al., 1976). We hoped that the Quality of School Life information fed back to the case study schools would provide such a contribution.

Nature of Feedback

When the seven schools agreed to take part in the case study they were sent a document which explained the theoretical basis of the Quality of School Life Study and the purpose of the case study, together with the results of the survey of 14-year-olds.

The next contact with schools took the form of talking to the principals and some members of staff about the project in more detail. Quite lengthy discussions ensued, as all school personnel present expressed a keen interest in the quality of school life concept, and the development of a measure and its applicability in the school context. Various uses were suggested for such a measure - as a discussion topic in Social Studies or English classes, as a counselling aid, and as an input to staff discussion of students or school policy in that it could provide information about student attitudes from a source other than the usual (subjective) teacher source.

Researchers talked about the study to a wider range of teachers during and after the administration of the questionnaires in the schools, and all but a very few showed the same sort of interest and enthusiasm as the smaller staff groups in the first school visits.

Over the next few months results of the Quality of School Life questionnaires were sent to the schools in several forms: frequency counts of item responses in the five response categories expressed as percentages for the four levels within each school (received only by that school) as well as the average for all schools; bar graphs (Figures 3.1 and 3.2) to illustrate the effect of school, year level, and sex on the seven dimensions of schooling measured by the questionnaire; and a table which listed, for each school, the mean scores for the seven dimensions at each year level within the school.

These three documents provided schools with information about the perceived quality of school life of their own schools in relation to other schools, both at the level of general scores for the seven dimensions and at the individual item level; in addition it enabled schools to compare the patterns of response at different year levels within their own schools.

Shortly after sending the final piece of information, the researchers visited schools to help principals, vice-principals, and interested staff members interpret the results and to discuss with them the implications of the results for their schools. Even the personnel from low-scoring schools showed a readiness to discuss the results and an interest in finding out more. Because of the interest expressed by schools, more detailed information about individual school performances was extracted from the data and sent to the schools in the form of a table which listed items under dimension headings and identified those items for which year level agreement responses in a school were at least 10 per cent above or below the average responses of other schools.

Finally, each school was sent a brief interpretative statement about the documents they had received which summarized year level and school characteristics, from which the following excerpts are taken.

> School 1. Compared with students in other schools at that level, Year 9 students were in strong agreement with items in the Positive Affect, Opportunity, and Identity categories; they had a good relationship with teachers, displayed pride in self and school, showed they had achieved social acceptance and enjoyed learning. Year 10 students showed a very high level of agreement with items in all categories but Adventure; they displayed confidence in their ability, they developed feelings of self-worth and self-awareness, were well-treated by teachers, but lacked confidence in their relationships with other students. Year 11 students' responses were close to the average responses for that year level, except that they showed a markedly high general satisfaction with school and felt they had learned a lot about themselves; along with Year 12, they were much less inclined to feel that teachers were friendly to them in class than their equivalents in other schools. Year 12 students felt that the school helped them to develop good relationships with other students and to know themselves better, but they showed a certain lack of confidence in themselves and their teachers. Overall, students at this school seemed to really enjoy being there, felt that their teachers were communicative and peer group receptive, and that the school helped to develop self-knowledge and made work seem worthwhile.
>
> School 2. Looking at the profiles of the four year levels at the school it would seem that, compared with the students at the other schools, Year 9 students feel a little more intimidated by teachers and other students, but feel happier about school in general; Year 10 students seem to have stronger feelings about the inflexibility of teachers, but have developed some confidence in themselves. Compared to their counterparts in other schools, students in the two senior years seem to show a more positive attitude towards school than the younger students: Year 11 students seem to derive more satisfaction from social interaction and the learning situation and have developed some confidence in their own ability, although they feel less happy about their relationship with teachers; Year 12 students appear to be more confident about their scholastic ability although they have some reservations about their relationship with teachers. Overall, the students seem to have developed some confidence in themselves, but they do not feel that they are well-treated by teachers.
>
> School 3. There are two items (42 and 50) where student responses are above average at all year levels, indicating that, according to students, this school is a place where the rights of students are considered to be important, and where students value the two-way communication established with teachers. Students at three levels indicate particular agreement with items 32, 27, 16, 46, 1 and 5. This

seems to show that students feel they are responsible people, trusted by teachers, and encouraged to find out things for themselves; that teachers treat students with friendliness, fairness, and understanding; and that there is an atmosphere of friendliness among the students in general. There were two items where student responses at three levels fell below the average (4 and 15) - these students did not see the value of the things they learn at school, and did not think others saw them as important people. (We have ignored the items dealing with competition, because this criteria does not seem to apply at this school and students experienced difficulty in responding adequately). Years 10 and 11 seem to derive particular pleasure from the work they do and from their relationship with teachers (see Adventure and Opportunity responses). The overall impression is of a school that develops independence of thought, a spirit of friendliness, and a particularly positive teacher-student relationship.

School 4. Compared with their equivalents in other schools: Year 9 students show a lower level of agreement with items in the Status and Identity categories, pointing to a low self-opinion; Year 10 students show a lower level of agreement with more than half the items in five of the seven categories, particularly in the Adventure domain - these students do not enjoy school work or see its relevance, have poor peer and teacher relationships, a low self-opinion, and feel they generally cannot cope; Year 11 students do not like school, and have a low self-estimate of ability, but they seem to be more successful with school socialization processes. The responses of Year 12 students seem to indicate that they feel that they are successful at school and have achieved a position of prestige to a greater extent than their peer group at the other schools; for no item were Year 12 responses more than 10 per cent below the all schools average, just as for no item were Year 10 students more than 10 per cent above the all schools average. Overall (and excluding Year 12) only two items elicited a uniformly high or low response across year levels, and these indicated that students found teachers inflexible and learning not enjoyable.

School 5. Compared with the students at the other schools: Year 9 students seem to be socially integrated, but without a high self-image; Year 10 students seem to have a more positive attitude to learning and its value, but tend to have a lower assessment of their status in the school; Year 11 students are more certain of their competence although the socialization component of their school experience seems to be less effective. The latter statement about socialization also applies to Year 12 - these students react in the same way as their peers in other schools to participation in the learning experience (that is, they derive more enjoyment from it than do students in lower forms); they express rather more confidence in their teachers but not in their assessment of their own ability to achieve nor in the relevance of learning.

School 6. Compared to their counterparts in other schools: Year 9 students seem to display more confidence in their own ability and status, more enjoyment of learning, and they have better relationships with teachers; Year 10 students have mixed feelings about their abilities, do not feel as happy about their relationship with teachers, and express more disenchantment with school in general; Year 11 students express more enthusiasm about schoolwork and their relationship with teachers, and have a more positive general attitude to the school. Year 12 students appreciate the opportunity they have for interaction with teachers, and feel that their status in the school is recognized, but, compared to Year 12 students in other schools, they seem to lack confidence in themselves and their ability.

There are three items which evoke positive responses, compared to other schools, at three of the four year levels, and thus may be seen as representing a particular feature of life for students at your school: item 21 indicates that the students feel they have a hand in shaping their destinies at school, and items 41 and 27 seem to

indicate a friendly and open relationship between teachers and students (with the exception of Year 10 students).

School 7. Year 9 responses in the Status domain tend to show a higher level of agreement than the all schools average for that level; they display a confidence in themselves and their ability; they seem to be split in their attitude to teachers - they appear to have a good relationship except in respect to the marking of work. Year 10 students have a very positive attitude to school, particularly in the Adventure category, showing high self-esteem and a good relationship with teachers and peers. A general lack of interest in school pervades the responses of Year 11 students, a low involvement in the socialization process, and a negative attitude to teachers. Year 12 students seem to feel that school is restrictive and irrelevant, and they do not feel successful in social relationships. Overall, although the students in this school seem to develop a certain independence, they feel that the school does not make it easy to get to know oneself or to establish good peer relationships.

School Aims

During our visits to the schools we had collected any documentation that was available on school aims. We had hoped to compare the questionnaire outcomes with the stated aims of each school in order to provide additional feedback to the schools, and to further our own research purposes. In the initial planning stages we had thought we might find schools that produced particularly high responses in one or other of the domains (a 'Status' school or an 'Adventure' school) and we would then be able to examine the match with school aims. As it turned out, all schools followed the same pattern, with Identity responses recording the highest level of agreement and Adventure the lowest, so no attempt could be made at matching aims. Nevertheless we thought it could be worthwhile to look at school aims in the light of particular characteristics of schools that emerged from the questionnaire analysis.

Unfortunately this proved to be an unprofitable exercise - some of the statements of aims were too short and general to be of use, covering the familiar ground of the academic, social, physical, vocational, aesthetic, and religious (in schools with church affiliations) aspects of individual personal development; other statements were so detailed and all-encompassing that it was difficult to identify the real priorities of the school as a functioning unit.

One school, School 3, did have a short statement of aims that contained specific aims that were not found in any of the other school statements:

> To establish and maintain co-operative, friendly and supportive relations between staff and students.
> To foster co-operation rather than competition in learning experiences and to encourage students to become self-disciplined, self-motivated and adaptable.
> To allow students to take part in the development of their own education.
> To place respect for the individual at a very high premium.

The results of the case study would seem to indicate that both teachers and students at this school were aware of these aims and striving for their realization.

Outcomes of Feedback

Staff in most of the schools made use of the information given to them about their students' perceptions of the quality of their school lives. Several teachers reported to us that they had used the Quality of School Life concept or students' own responses as a lesson theme. Four schools used the information as a basis for discussion in staff conferences; some of these schools were involved in the development of new statements of school policy and found the questionnaire results a valuable source of information about student attitudes.

One of the researchers was invited to attend an all-day staff seminar in one school to explain and discuss the school's results, and found the staff very receptive and interested in talking through the implications of the results. In this school, as in the others, responses to some items reinforced the beliefs of staff members about the attitudes of their students, while other item responses surprised and, in some cases, dismayed them. It was this last type of reaction in particular that formed the basis for useful discussion.

The vice-principal of one of the lower-scoring schools deliberately provoked heated staff discussion by pinning up a list of the most negative responses from his school's students, and was pleased with the hostile reaction it received, which he hoped would lead to a rethinking of the school's educational role and the role of staff members within it.

Another school, a high-scoring one, was particularly keen to obtain a more detailed response analysis and a written interpretation of results, to use both as a basis for extended staff discussion, and as information from an objective source to aid the school's public relations work in the local (and often hostile) community.

Thus it would seem that the feedback to the schools of information about student perceptions of the quality of school life served a variety of purposes, from pedagogy to propaganda. From the positive reaction of schools to the project, it is probable that the questionnaire, when it has undergone its final refinement, could provide schools with an instrument that could make a useful contribution to school development.

CHAPTER 7

CONCLUSION

In this chapter the findings of the various aspects of the case study are drawn together and summarized, and the implications of the findings are considered in relation to the main Quality of School Life study and with regard to possible directions for future research.

Taking the Quality of School Life instrument as a starting point for the case study, we sought to identify the differences and similarities in the quality of school life over a range of year levels in seven schools, and to investigate in some detail in four of the schools the processes which led to the formation of student perceptions of their school lives, particularly in the areas covered by the four domains of schooling in our model.

Fulfilment of Case Study Objectives

In Chapter 2 the objectives of the Quality of School Life case study were stated, and some of the researchers' expectations in relation to the objectives were discussed. To what extent have these expectations been fulfilled?

Objective 1 concerned the differences between schools in the quality of school life; it was conjectured that sex of student, type of school, and the nature of the teacher-student relationship were three variables that could be responsible for such differences. The questionnaire data analysis showed that there were differences between schools: the sex of students played some part, in that girls' scores were higher than boys' scores in six of the seven scales; in our very limited sample, type of school attended was not a determinant of quality of school life, for both government and non-government schools produced high and low scores; the nature of the teacher-student relationship was shown to be an important factor in distinguishing between schools, influencing student responses in all four domains. The nature of the differences between schools in the four domains was not such that it could produce a 'Status school' or an 'Adventure school' as we had hoped; all schools followed a similar pattern, rating Identity items highest and Adventure items lowest.

Year level differences in the quality of school life were referred to in Objective 2; it was expected that changes would occur in the perceptions of students as they progressed through the school and again when they left it. On the basis of past research findings, a more negative attitude was expected of students in Years 9 and 10 than in Years 11 and 12. Year level differences did emerge, although no regular pattern could be observed over the seven scales, except that differences were most extreme at the Year 10 level. More sense could be made of year level differences in a consideration of

specific items or clusters of items within the scales. Thus, teacher-student relationships were seen as closer and more fruitful in Year 12 than at lower levels, and self-confidence increased as students grew older, but Year 9 students were more optimistic than Year 12 students about the use and value of their schooling. Ex-students altered the present students' domain ratings of Identity first, followed by Opportunity, Status, and Adventure; the placements of Opportunity and Adventure were reversed in ex-students' perceptions. In retrospect, school leavers placed a higher value on their relationship with teachers, and a lower value on the usefulness of their learning experiences at school.

Objective 3 called for a more detailed examination of students' perceptions of the quality of their school lives and the factors in the school environment that influenced their perceptions. Factors that were expected to have some influence were teachers, peers, curricular and extra-curricular offerings, discipline, and assessment. The research literature had led us to expect that the first two factors would be the most important, with the influence of peers on student attitude formation overriding that of teachers. The reverse proved to be true in the case study: not only in the learning acquisition domains (where it may have been expected) but also in the social development domains (where it would not have been expected), the influence of teachers predominated over the influence of peers. The quality of life for students in schools depended on, more than anything else, the relationship between teachers and students. Subject matter, subject choice, and school rules played minor roles; assessment was of some importance in determining the quality of school life but not in the ways that might have been anticipated. Connell et al. (1975:222) refer to the intellectual culture which teachers convey to students, and argue that the school's 'system of competitive assessment is the main sanction by which it controls the students' learning'; thus one might have expected that student attitudes to learning (captured in the Adventure and Opportunity scales) would be most positive in schools with a strong emphasis on intellectual requirements and competitive assessment. In our sample, School 4 was the school that best exemplified these qualities, but the responses of its students in Years 9, 10, and 11 in the Adventure and Opportunity scales were the most negative of the seven schools; even in Year 12, where students reaped the rewards for being the standard-bearers of academic excellence, student responses were rated second and third among the seven schools in the satisfaction derived from the learning acquisition domains. It was at School 3, where academic excellence was only one of the schools' aims and where competitive assessment was deliberately de-emphasized, that students' attitudes to their learning experiences in Years 11 and 12 were the most positive.

Objectives 4 and 5 concerned feedback from students on questionnaire items, student understanding of the constructs, and the identification of any additional factors that might contribute to the quality of school life for students. As a result of discussions

with students, some modifications were made to the model and the questionnaire, although this did not involve any major structural or theoretical change. The emphasis in the Opportunity domain was changed from the relevance of schooling to the recognition of achievement, because the latter phrase had more meaning for students while still describing accurately the experience we were trying to identify, one that would lead students to qualify for future opportunities by acquiring technical competence. New items were written for the second version of the questionnaire with this slightly changed emphasis in mind. In the Identity domain, the development of self-awareness had been seen as a dual process involving learning about oneself and interacting with others. Student comments highlighted the need for a third category which represented the marrying of the other two, a process by which one learnt about oneself through interaction with others. In the second version of the questionnaire (used in the main Quality of School Life study) items were written to cover this aspect of Identity.

Other changes were made to the wording of items in the second questionnaire as a result of discussions with students in the case study schools: negative wording of items was abandoned as too confusing; colloquial phrases with which students were not familiar were deleted or rewritten; qualificatory words such as 'very' and 'always' were deleted because of difficulties with choice of appropriate response categories; items inapplicable to some schools were discarded; and items couched in general terms were eliminated because of student uncertainty about their personal applicability.

Objective 6 concerned the outcomes of feedback to the schools. Each school, in the course of the year, was sent information about the Quality of School Life questionnaire results, presented in a variety of forms. This information was supplemented by personal explanations from the researchers on visits to the school. All the schools expressed interest in the Quality of School Life project and the development of an instrument, and they made use of the information provided to them in a variety of ways: as a theme for discussion in class lessons, as an input to a school evaluation process and school policy formation, and as a basis for discussion in staff conferences. It was not possible, as we had hoped, to relate each school's results to its stated aims, because the aims were inappropriately expressed for such an exercise.

The Domains of Schooling

The framework of the case study had enabled us to extend the scope of the Quality of School Life investigation to include between-school and between-year level differences. The case study questionnaire data and interview information pin-pointed the particular factors and questionnaire items that explained these differences.

In the Status domain the most critical area for determining the quality of school life concerned experiences that fostered students' feelings of personal importance;

allied to this were the areas of student responsibilities and rights. The growth of students' self-confidence was most evident i. those schools that showed concern for all students rather than just for the high achievers. It was in this area that the differences between year levels could be seen: the younger students felt less important and less responsible than the older students; often it was the peer group that encouraged or inhibited these experiences for the youngest students, whereas experiences of personal importance and responsibility derived more from contact with teachers as the students grew older.

The two aspects of the socialization process that contributed most to student experiences in the Identity domain were the friendliness and acceptance of other students and the acquisition of self-knowledge. The strength of the interactive experience depended on the extent of the acceptance and friendliness - it was at its strongest when the interactive group spread across year levels and was not just confined to a small sub-sample of the peer group. With regard to the other aspect of Identity, the quality of school life was enhanced in schools where students were encouraged by teachers to develop their self-awareness and were conscious of the process and its importance. Student reactions in this domain showed no appreciable differences between year levels, although this was the domain that produced the greatest differences between boys and girls, eliciting more positive perceptions from girls.

In the area of personal development, students experienced Adventure in learning in schools where student initiative and involvement were encouraged. The critical factor in this process was perceived to be the teacher. Teachers who showed concern for the all-round development of the individual student and were prepared to devote time and effort to this development created an atmosphere in which students could benefit from their learning experiences. The relationship with teachers improved as students proceeded through the school to Year 12, and was remembered positively, sometimes more positively, by ex-students. In retrospect, for ex-students with some experience of the adult world, this domain of schooling, Adventure, increased in importance in relation to the total school experience, whereas it was the least important contribution to the quality of school life for students still at school.

Opportunity was the other domain of schooling in the learning acquisition area; the fairness of teachers, the value of learning, and the ability to cope with school work were the factors that were most influential in determining the quality of school life in this domain, particularly the first factor, the attitude of teachers. Student satisfaction and confidence were highest where teachers were seen to exhibit an openness and evenhandedness in their treatment of students, and to generate an atmosphere of general encouragement rather than selective discouragement. Year level differences were apparent here; it was felt that this type of encouragement and fair-mindedness was available to students at the higher levels in the school more than at the lower levels. A

reverse trend could be seen in the attitudes of students to the value and relevance of learning; the higher up the school they went the less convinced students became that this was an important contributory factor to the quality of their school lives, and ex-students were the most convinced that much of their schooling lacked relevance and usefulness in their post-school lives.

The trends that emerged from the case study, as outlined in the two previous paragraphs, substantiate the statistical findings of the second Quality of School Life survey. According to the case study evidence, the strongest contributory factor to perceived student satisfaction in these two domains was the attitude of teachers, which in both cases meant a concern for and encouragement of student learning; in similar vein, the factor analysis of the survey data produced a new factor that was comprised of the items from the two domains that dealt with the teacher-student relationship.

There is also a link to the case-study in the newly defined factor of Opportunity that emerged from the survey analysis, a factor comprised of those items that dealt with students' perceptions of their own achievement capabilities. The original definition, and the items written to meet it, stressed the relevance of learning; but because the younger case study students had difficulty in coping with the meaning and implications of these items, the second version of the questionnaire contained new items that explored student feelings of adequacy in the learning situation as a more logical link, from the student point of view, to future achievement. It was these items that survived the second survey analysis to define the Opportunity domain.

A further result of discussions with case study students was that new items were written for the Identity scale in the second questionnaire that concerned the acquisition of self-knowledge through interaction with others, and it was these items, together with the straight self-knowledge items, that defined the Identity factor in the second survey analysis. (For a detailed discussion of the survey analysis, see Williams and Batten, 1981).

On the basis of survey and case study findings, a follow-up to the Quality of School Life study is planned. Further development of the measure will be undertaken and the questionnaire will be administered across year levels and schools to a sample of students large enough to permit a detailed statistical analysis of between-school and between-year level differences in students' perceptions of their school environment.

The Four Schools

From the information derived from questionnaires, discussions, interviews, and observation in the case study it was possible to delineate quality of school life profiles of the four schools.

School 1 was a Catholic girls school with a conventional, academically-oriented curriculum and an operational structure that was formal and well-regulated; within this

structure, teachers and students had established a good working relationship, based on mutual respect. Care and concern for both the academic and personal development of the individual student was exhibited by teachers and appreciated by students; the growth of personal identity was fostered through an undertaking and acceptance of others, linked to the underlying Christian philosophy of the school. The students' sense of security in their school environment was enhanced by their consciousness of its heritage and the regard accorded it by people outside the school. In this school more than any of the others the students expressed greater general satisfaction and happiness with their school experience.

School 3 was a semi-rural co-educational high school. The school had a flexible structure with a wide-ranging and innovative curriculum, and was run on democratic lines involving student participation in the decision-making process with regard to school policy and operation. Students were encouraged to develop an independence of thought and action in order to achieve self-motivation in learning and self-discipline in behaviour. The ethos of the school was co-operative rather than competitive; students developed academic and social confidence through the friendliness and support of their teachers both in and out of class. As well as maintaining academic standards, importance was placed on developing communication skills at a formal and informal level as another means of equipping students to cope with life in the adult world. In an open and flexible framework like this, personality clashes and conflicts of interest were more visible than in a school run on more conventional lines, but resolutions of such conflicts were actively sought. Another visible source of conflict was in the area of community relations - staff and students felt continually called upon to defend the school against misinformed and negative publicity.

The outstanding feature of School 4, a suburban co-educational high school, was its extremely high academic standard which had produced a record of excellent performances in the Higher School Certificate examination. This heavy academic emphasis was an important factor in determining the quality of life for students in the school. There was a clear-cut division between students at Year 12 and students at other levels; the difference between two groups centred on the attitude of teachers to students, and the attitude of students to work, the former often governing the latter. School life in Year 12 was a positive and rewarding academic experience, made so primarily through the support and interest shown by the teachers, whereas in lower year levels (particularly Year 10) schoolwork was often boring and difficult, the teachers often demanding and intolerant. This academic pressure generated tensions in the students, more obviously in the lower levels, less obviously but still present in some students at Year 12; also, while Year 12 students were confident and assured within the school, they were not so sure of their ability to handle, on other than academic terms, the adult world they were about to enter.

Unlike the other three schools, School 6 (an outer surburban girls high school) did not display clear characteristics that set it apart from most secondary schools. The environment it provided for its students evinced a mixed reaction from them, except for Year 10 students, who had a more decidedly negative reaction to their school experiences. Overall, students' perceptions were more positive about the learning acquisition areas of schooling and more negative about the social development areas. The students in this school found it difficult to articulate their feelings about the more intangible school life concepts such as self-awareness, responsibility, and respect; they had most to say about their teachers. Some teachers were seen to be friendly and helpful (particularly in Year 12), others uninterested and impatient; discriminatory attitudes towards the less successful students were discerned in both teachers and other students. For many of the students there seemed to be a lack of stimulation in the learning environment; there also seemed to be a slight but pervasive lack of self-confidence and self-esteem in the student population, although this was not evident in ex-students' recollections of their school experiences. This was the only one of the four schools that showed a divergence in the overall reaction to school of students and ex-students. The reactions of School 6's ex-students were more positive, particularly about school-induced feelings of confidence and success.

These four schools were the highest and lowest scorers on the Quality of School Life questionnaire; the information derived from subsequent discussions with students supported the questionnaire results and enabled us to identify some of the reasons for the high and low scores (as discussed in the previous section). One might have expected that from these various sources of information there might emerge a school model which would display the key attributes that make for a high quality of school life. This expectation was not fulfilled - there were greater differences between the two high-scoring schools, Schools 1 and 3, in school structure, operation, and philosophical orientation than between any other two schools of the seven in the study. So we discovered, as many other researchers have before us, that there is no set formula that can be followed to create the ideal school environment - instead there are a number of educational environments that approximate the ideal through a variety of means.

However, there was one component of the school environment, constantly referred to by students, that seemed to have a critical influence (for the better in high-scoring schools, for the worse in low-scoring schools) on the quality of school life for students, and that was the teaching component. Other factors - such as the nature and range of the curriculum, other students, facilities, school rules - all contributed to a greater or lesser extent, according to the school, to the general satisfaction of students; but it was the attitude and approach of teachers that was the constant and crucial contributory factor to student satisfaction.

Although there were marked differences in the school environments of the

high-scoring schools, there were certain student characteristics common to both that were not found in the low-scoring schools. Firstly, in Schools 1 and 3 the students were better able to put their feelings about school into words, to explore the reasons for their reactions, and to understand abstract concepts and relate them to their own experiences. Secondly, there was more commonality in the response patterns of the four year levels within School 1 and School 3 than within School 4 and School 6; the latter two schools displayed divergent patterns, with Year 10 at both schools exhibiting low levels of satisfaction. Thirdly, the interviews with students revealed that in the high-scoring schools most of the students who gave negative responses to questionnaire items did so for reasons that were not directly connected with the school environment (such as personality traits) or that were transitory in nature (such as having a detention on the day the questionnaires were administered); the students with negative responses in the low-scoring schools tended to locate the sources of their dissatisfaction in the school environment. Thus the interviews served not only to confirm but to accentuate the quality of school life trends identified in the questionnaire outcomes.

Directions for Future Research

Several of the findings of the Quality of School Life case study bring forward issues that seem to warrant further investigation; these are the findings that concern the power of the teacher-student relationship, peer group influence, Year 10 motivation, and the attitude of ex-students to their schooling.

Previous research evidence suggested that parents and peer groups had a greater influence than teachers on children and adolescents (see Coleman, 1961; Coleman et al., 1966; Campbell and McSweeney, 1970; Connell et al., 1975). This evidence rested largely on student responses to questions such as 'Which one of these things would be hardest for you to take - your parents' disapproval, your teacher's disapproval, or breaking with your friend?' (Coleman, 1961). This type of question is set in the context of the total environment of the child, where family and friendship networks wield a powerful influence. Because the peer group is present in the school context of children as well as in the home context, it is easy to slip into the assumption that peer influence is as powerful in school as out. Few research studies look at the relative strength of peer and teacher influence solely within the school context, other than in association with questions about occupational and educational aspirations, which themselves are directed to a beyond-school arena. The findings of the Quality of Life survey study and case study were that the influence of teachers on student attitudes to school was powerful and pervasive, not only in the area of learning acquisition but also in the area of social development. Further support for this finding comes from a recent Australian study (Anderson et al., 1980) which found that students were more concerned about teachers

than about assessment, curriculum, organization, or discipline, and that the greater part of this concern was about how teachers relate to their students. In our study the nature of the teacher-student relationship remained the most constant factor in determining the quality of school life for students, even when the philosophy and operation of the schools in question were quite different, as was the case with our two highest-scoring schools. Research is needed to determine more accurately the nature and relative strength of peer and teacher influence in the school context, and the particular circumstances which foster these influences.

An extension of the discussion of peer influence is the issue, also high-lighted by the case study, of the varying influence of the peer group at different year levels. Hargreaves (1967) suggested that conformity to the peer group would be increasingly powerful after Year 9, the mid-teens being a period when parental and teacher authority is rejected, but the case study findings suggested that the peer group influence was stronger in Years 9 and 10 than in later years. Year 10 seemed to be a critical year for student development; students at this year level produced more extreme responses to their school environment (in both a positive and a negative direction) than students at any other level, an indication perhaps of the acuteness of the stresses and conflicts felt by this age group. A recent Schools Commission (1980) report refers to the immaturity of students in this age-group and the ambiguity of their status both at school and at home. Further work needs to be undertaken to disentangle the effects of the school environment on student attitudes from the physiological and psychological effects of pubertal and adolescent development.

Another issue that emerged from the case study as worthy of further investigation is the attitude of ex-students to their school experience, and the ways in which this attitude is different from and similar to the attitude of students still in school. Those aspects of school that concerned the usefulness and relevance of school learning were regarded far less positively, and the relationship with teachers far more positively, by the ex-students in our study than by the students still at school. These differences may have occurred because the schools had changed in the year or two since the students had left, or it may have been because the sample of ex-students in each school was too small to be representative. This was a minor aspect of our study, but it is one worth exploring further, particularly in the context of current concern for youth unemployment and the appropriateness of the secondary school curriculum. Longitudinal studies would seem to be the most appropriate format for this type of investigation, as has been done in America, for example, by Flanagan (1978) and Bachman et al. (1978). A longitudinal study of students' perceptions as they proceed through school and on to work or further education could provide elucidation of the particular quality of school life aspects that increase or decrease in importance over time.

Because children and adolescents spend so many of their waking hours in a school environment it is important that we learn as much as possible about the effects that this environment has on its inhabitants. Research studies have tended to concentrate on the quantitative rather than the qualitative aspects of the school environment. This study sought to provide a clearer understanding and explanation of the process of schooling through an investigation of the nature of the quality of life for students in schools, concentrating on the differences that emerged between year levels in a limited number of school environments.

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APPENDIX I

SCHOOL LIFE QUESTIONNAIRE

SCHOOL LIFE

NAME ..... YEAR .....

We are interested to know what your feelings are about your life at school both the good things and the bad things. Each item on this sheet says that **school is a place where** some particular thing happens to you or you feel a particular way. We want you to say whether you **Strongly Agree**, **Agree**, **Half Agree**, **Disagree**, or **Strongly Disagree** with the items. Please read each item carefully and tick the answer which best describes how you feel.

All the answers you give are confidential.

SCHOOL IS A PLACE WHERE		Strongly Agree	Agree	Half Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1	I feel I am a responsible person	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
2	I know how I am supposed to behave	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
3	I am popular with other students	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
4	people think I'm not very important	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
5	I am not trusted to work on my own	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
6	people think a lot of me	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
7	I have good friends	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
8	I feel that things go my way	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
9	I get satisfaction from my ability to cope with my work	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
10	I feel on top of the world	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
11	I can see that what I learn will be useful to me later on	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
12	teachers give me the marks I deserve	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
13	I can learn whatever I need to know	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
14	I feel important	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
15	I don't see the value of what we learn	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
16	teachers listen to what I say	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
17	I feel restless	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
18	I know how to cope with the work	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
19	I get upset	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
20	I feel proud to be a student	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
21	I can't get things to work my way	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
22	I am not treated with respect	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
23	I really like to go	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

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Please Turn Over

SCHOOL IS A PLACE WHERE		Strongly Agree	Agree	Half Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
24	I get to know myself better	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
25	I like to find out more about the things we do in class	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
26	I feel successful	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
27	teachers are friendly to me in class	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
28	I feel proud of myself	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
29	I never win anything	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
30	other students listen to what I say	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
31	I get excited and interested in things	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
32	I have learnt how to find whatever information I need	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
33	schoolwork is always interesting	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
34	teachers take a personal interest in helping me with my schoolwork	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
35	I don't do well in tests	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
36	I feel very lonely	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
37	I learn a lot about myself	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
38	I feel depressed and unhappy	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
39	I can mix with the people I admire	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
40	teachers take notice of me in class	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
41	teachers will not discuss the marks they give me	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
42	students have very few rights	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
43	I often win competitions in class or in sport	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
44	nobody takes any notice of me	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
45	learning is a lot of fun	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
46	teachers are fair and just	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
47	I can learn what I need to get by in life	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
48	I don't like to go	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
49	other students are very friendly	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
50	I am unable to question the marks I am given by the teachers	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
51	I feel bored	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
52	I feel I am a worthwhile person	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐